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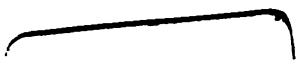


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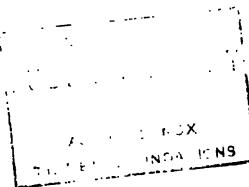
EMMA BEAVER BYRNE

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Dear old garden, lying there so beautiful in the moonlight, I have been so happy with you always . . . But even as I look, the black storm-clouds engulf the moon.

The Song Beneath the Key

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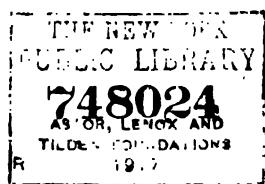
MR. & MRS.
OLIVER
T. PARKER

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The Song Beneath the Keys

BY
EMMA BEAVER BYRNE

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TO
M.E.C. AND M.E.Y.

**GRATITUDE IS THE ONLY DEBT THAT,
TO REPAY, WE MUST STILL OWE.**



PRELUDE

“ Oh, the words beneath the keys!
How they baffle, wound and tease!
Now you have them — now they’re gone —
A song that’s finished e’er begun.
Filled with roses and with lees,
Is my song beneath the keys.”



THE SONG BENEATH THE KEYS

CHAPTER I

JUNE.

I HAVE just come in out of the moonlight, where I have been questioning, dreaming, since night-fall. I gazed at the cold distant moon, mentally pleading for a peep into the future, some little sign to guide me, but she sailed on unheeding. Nature, so warm and responsive at times, again seems cruel and cold. She has her unfailing systems, a guiding power that leads to sure results, that no sorrow of man can affect or change. Nature never retracts; the work of today advances the promise of tomorrow, while man is left to drift at will — like a creature of chance, he seems, like a pawn on the chessboard of life, played by the hand of fate, to win or lose as the chance may be. His work today may be all wrong in the light of tomorrow's progress, and a lifelong trouble forged.

How I long for some authority other than my own to direct me, and as my thoughts revert to the

dear mother, who left me when but a child, I can but question. Is there no return, no invisible means of communication when your dear ones know not what to do? Even your God, mother, has gone from me. Long ago — years, it seems — I ceased to repeat the prayer you taught me. Forgive me, but I cannot assume to believe what is to me but mockery. "Our Father which art in heaven." Where is heaven? Is there a heaven? I might remain upon my knees all night, pleading with this far-distant God who dwells in a mysterious locality, and receive no more response than from the insensible moon.

God is dear to me, mother, only because he was your God; not for any assistance He has ever given me. As a child I feared Him as some evil genius, a terrible reality, who ever pursued me with His critical eye; allowing no misstep to go unpunished, judging me from the heights of His cold perfection, knowing nothing of the difficulties of life. And so, I passed from rebellion into questioning and doubt, until now I feel indifferent. God is to me as some idol of old, a legend, to which my heart will not give credence, church-going a key to respectability. I will have none of it — I will make my own decisions — I will stand on my own merits.

But why have I wandered into this moralizing strain? I felt that I had closed and locked this door of my mind forever — I had thrown away the key that I might never be tempted to take another peep.

It is such aimless rambling, circles within circles, creeds within creeds, an endless path.

I am in such perplexity tonight! Can it be that I am cherishing a Utopian dream — hoping against hope for help that I know no human power can give me; for the “still, small voice,” for which mother so often bade me listen? Begone! I will not be so mesmerized. It was only self-deception — the voice of her own beautiful spirit which she heard.

Girlhood is an exquisite thing, and mine has been rainbow-tinted. Men call me fair; many have sought me to travel life’s highway with them — a highway seemingly smooth and sunny — seeking to fix upon me rose-colored glasses, which we blind women so gladly wear — so beautiful in this dream of love.

But of all my suitors who has looked beyond my fair skin, my glossy hair, my good teeth, my sparkling eyes, my lithe form? Have I been anything but form to the men who have sought me? Who of them all has considered me a thinking creature, with whom it would be pleasant to dwell in the evening of life? Who of them all would have sought beneath a plain face for the real me, the woman with greater mental than physical needs? Beauty appeals to man, woos him and leads him on as a lode-star, until he cannot distinguish the false from the true, but only character holds his love. And yet, strange anomalies that we are, while I resent this physical wooing, it draws me as the magnet draws the steel.

I sometimes feel like a bird in a snare, and awake to the fact that there are strange fires burning within me — fires I have no desire to quench ; but thus far none have satisfied my heart. Why? Men of wealth, of social position, have plead for my hand ; the kind of men whose attention woman values, have been sent away, and after my long vigil with the moon tonight, I think — yes, I am sure — I know why. It is the call of my sons and daughters, whom I have promised to give the very best father I can find. He has been long in coming, but tonight, reason tells me he has arrived. His letter here in my bosom, put there for safe keeping, does not thrill me, but it comforts me, fills me with hope for the future, security.

This man that I have chosen for the father of my children has high ideals, fine intelligence, a sense of morality as high as my own. No doctor's certificate of purity needed by this king of men — it is written on face and form, in voice and action and atmosphere. That "love is woman's whole existence" has been placed in memory's precious casket with mother's God! I have waited long for this pearl of great price and have concluded that it is but an *ignis fatuus*, that vanishes as we approach.

Then, why refuse this man who is all that I have promised my children? I will question no longer. I will give him the answer he desires.

I am so relieved and — yes, I believe I am happy — it means so much to keep a promise.

CHAPTER II

JUNE.

DONALD left me an hour ago. I watched him as he vanished down the moonlit path, his shadow ever lengthening until it seemed the shadow of a giant; and fancy whispered, "It is a giant, carrying away your freedom." And as I listened until the sound of his footsteps died away in the distance, I shivered as with cold — yet, the night is balmy.

For an hour I have sat pondering, fighting this sense of apprehension, striving to force my heart to acknowledge its happiness; yet, have I failed. Donald is a dear friend, a man who inspires confidence. Our two years' acquaintance, and the close companionship of late, is filled with bright memories into which no jarring element has entered. He is so strong, so capable, my ideal man — a little arbitrary at times, perhaps — so are all forceful men. Our standards of life are much the same. We have health, youth, intellect — what need have we of more? And yet — why this tantalizing fear, this shrinking from personal contact?

For I must confess, hard as it seems — when I have promised to be Donald's wife — that I shrink

from his caresses ; and when he sought my lips, he found them cold and unresponsive, nor could I force the love-glow into them. He held me from him and looked at me with eyes so filled with love and longing that I could have fallen at his feet, begging forgiveness. Yet, when he drew me to him — because I could not help it — I placed my hands against his breast that I might not fall into a closer embrace. His lips closed tightly, his hands fell from me, a quick drawn breath, a penetrating glance, then he quietly turned from me and sauntered through the open doorway out into the moonlit garden, where I followed, abashed and a little frightened. He soon put me at ease, however, by assuming the old friendly relation. Not once again did he offer to caress me, and I was joyous, happy to be near him. Only — when leaving, he looked at me with such pleading, lovelit eyes, that all the maternal in me was awakened. I raised my arms, drawing his head to my breast, while I pressed my lips into his bonnie brown hair. He lifted his face to mine, with such a flood of love and happiness radiating it, that again — because I could not help it — I withdrew from him. And his parting words, "Remember you are mine for always and always and always," still ring in my ears and I rebel and let my thoughts rest in the past rather than the future.

But enough of these dolorous dumps. I have promised to wed very soon, the best man in all the

world, and this history of my wooing is for my daughter, so I must give to it her father's letter, the dearest, sweetest love letter that ever a girl received. I hesitate to give it to this little book, even for that dear daughter's eyes.

“ Dear little Lady of my Dreams :

“ Or rather, I should say, dear little lady who has fulfilled my dreams — dreams that I had almost despaired of ever realizing, dreams of perfect womanhood. In my thoughts I liken you to a beautiful, fragrant white rose ; a little thorny at times, which only adds zest to my desire to possess you.

“ You have been a merry comrade in our walks and drives, a charming hostess in your parlor, but when I have attempted to show my heart, you have become at once the thorny, cold white rose. Yet I have caught many glimpses of the fire beneath that reveals the woman worth while, a chaste woman with a heart of gold that will warm for one man alone, and not be frittered away in foolish flirtations.

“ You are a woman who will think for herself — no weakling, not one to be chained to the wheel of her lord's chariot and await his pleasure. You will be his equal, sharing with him his intellectual pursuits, helping him to grow into his greatest possibilities, demanding your share of life's progress.

“ This independence, this strength of character, arouses my most profound admiration, and I would not have you otherwise.

“ But, manlike, it is the beautiful woman that I love that I desire. And the fact that you have favored me over all your suitors these many months gives me courage to tell you of my love, and boldness to ask you to be my wife.

“ As you have kept yourself sweet and true, even so have I lived a clean life, not only for the woman I hope some day to call ‘ wife,’ but for the children who will call me “ father.” This is no boast, no spirit of egoism, but principle, my understanding of manhood, my duty to generations unborn.

“ No other woman has been asked to share my life. Your love is so vital a thing to me and I am so uncertain of you, that I dare not risk a verbal reply to my love. I feel that I could not stand before you and see your lips form a denial.

“ So often when I have been with you, when you have seemed all mine, when I could almost read your passing thought, when you drew me as a magnet and I could scarce resist taking you in my arms and telling you my love, you seemed to evade me—a subtle something held me back. Surely it cannot be that I have resisted woman’s charms all these years to have the love of a lifetime thrown back upon me.

“ You have love and appreciation of the fine

things of life. You believe in me, I know. Oh, Katheryne, if words could only convey to you what my dream of a home with you presiding — what the word 'wife' means to me! Can't you find a need in your life for me, dearest? Can't you give all I ask?

"Do not keep me in suspense. Any time to-night your call over the telephone will find me waiting.

"DONALD."

Dear Donald, could any girl resist such a letter, refuse such a man!

CHAPTER III

JUNE.

ALMOST a month since I have confided in my little book. I have been striving to keep away from introspection. I have lived out of doors among my flowers and pets — my beautiful flowers that seem to lift their heads at my coming, their fragrance rising to greet me, in flower language saying, “We welcome thee, sweet mistress, and thank thee for thy tender, watchful care.”

Dear Special Friend, walking with me in my garden yesterday, looking into the heart of a glowing rose, said: “God’s smile.” I thought, “What nonsense; they are my smiles, if any one’s. I prepared the ground, I planted the seeds and I have cultivated and watered, guarding carefully the tender plants until they could care for themselves;” but I said nothing, for she already regards me as a heathen.

I so often feel Margaret’s concern for what she terms my materialism. But I cannot see a logical foundation for her beliefs; she will unfold her philosophy to me as long as I will listen, but she will not argue with me — says “argument leads to

antagonism and strife." She quotes Christ's sayings as though they were as applicable today as when he lived and taught by precept and example in Galilee. She recognizes no chance in life — says "we are masters of our lives, that all evil is unreal and, therefore, to be overcome." If she were not so dear I would sometimes find her tiresome, with her positive assertions. She was mother's young friend, my "Dear Special Friend," in child parlance, and since mother's going, has taken me to her heart as her own. She is the perfect friend, but so visionary — more mesmerized than the dear mumsie; goes far beyond mother's wildest dreams of what God can do. *She does not believe; she knows.* I find it hard to be patient, at times.

When I told her about Donald and myself she was so pleased, for she considers Donald of great worth. She clasped my hands and in her earnest voice, said, "If only you were taking God into the home, I would have no fear for you," — just as though He could order the household and keep the hearth fires bright. Strange how deluded some people are!

I am writing in my garden today, seated on a stone bench under the rose arbor. This bench is one of my treasures; its gray tones harmonizing with the greens, adds an artistic touch to my garden parlor. I had often complained that my books and writing material must be carried back and forth from house to garden, and vice versa, as I could

plan no safe place to store them from the weather ; and then, too, if I chanced to wish to remain there without planning, I must make an extra trip for my books. On my return from an absence of some weeks last summer, I found this triangular bench in the most sheltered corner of my arbor — Donald had planned it and assisted Mike in its construction. It is built of small cobble-stones, made nice and broad, with a back rising just the right height for my elbow, when I wish to lean back and meditate ; to this was added a hollow, triangular stone table, with thick cement floor and top, with a cunning heavy oak door in the side ; the table is built just the right distance from the bench — even little alcoves for my feet under the cement floor. Here I could store my pillows, my books and tea-urn, my supply of wafers and sweets to nibble at, and to serve my friends when they chanced my way ; everything snug and secure from the weather, and the tiny gold key on the chain about my neck. This dear arbor that dates back to mother's bridal days ! Here mother sat with her sewing in the days before I was born. I think she must have woven the fragrance of roses into my life — I love them so.

Father left us when I was a wee tot and the roses and I grew up together, with the sad little mother always hovering near.

My faithful collie lies at my feet, his tender, loyal brown eyes fixed upon me, and his fluffy, yellow tail ready to respond to my slightest move. I often

think if we could be as true to friends, as unselfish with each other as our faithful dog friends, what a changed old world this would be.

I stoop to pat Jack's head, at which my beautiful Topsy stretches herself, licks a few stray hairs into place and, with stately tread, leaves her luxurious couch — a pillow at my side — and crowds herself under my arm. She is jealous to the core, and selfish, as all her kind. Jack, with a look of contempt, sinks at my feet and pretends to be asleep.

Topsy always reminds me of a pretty, vain woman, thinking only of herself, of her well-groomed person, of her dainty feet — always of her own comfort, of what she can get — never of what she can give.

Just outside my arbor is the aquarium, surrounded by ferns, with lily pads floating on its surface. A tap on the basin brings the fish in expectation of food, blowing bubbles — from their tiny mouths. I love to watch them playing — living, I suppose they would call it. This, too, was a gift from my young father to mother, for they loved to live in the open.

When father left us so suddenly years ago, we found, when all was over, that only this old house and garden, with a small annuity, remained to us; but with careful management, it has given me my education and supplied all my needs for a simple life, which is to me the perfect life, thanks to the heritage of my parents. My garden sufficed for the

lack of many things, and Sarah, my dear old house-keeper, has been faithful and tended me all the years.

My garden is my workshop as well as playground. Here I feel near to mother, among the flowers, so many of them planted by her own hand and which have grown so luxurious with the passing years. As I sit here today, I feel retrospective, a desire to cling to the past and hold at bay my rapidly approaching future. In the past month, one day has been much the same as another; Donald has been absorbed with an important case, having little time or thought to give to anything else.

On Sundays we have tramped through nearby forests, or over the distant hills, a walk often of twenty miles. Donald is a great lover of horses and frequently brings a mount for me, when we ride through the dappled forest paths and on to the river beyond, through country lanes and over rough highways unfrequented by motors. But more often, when we have an entire day, we prefer tramping.

Observation of our highways and byways causes one to conclude that walking has passed into the list of lost arts. We have lost sight of the pleasures and knowledge acquired by the pedestrian. Only a foot-passenger knows the habitat of plant and animal, for only a walker can pause at will to investigate the mysteries by the wayside — the nest of an unfamiliar bird fluttering from the bushes just beyond the fence; to ramble off the beaten

track; to find an entrance through the hedge and down through the pasture to the lily pond under the willows overhanging the little stream, or to pluck the long-stemmed, black-eyed Susans beckoning to us from the low-lying meadow land beyond the deep gulch, that none but the experienced pedestrian knows how to surmount.

And when returning in the early twilight, weary with the tramping over many miles, hungry, and laden with the spoils nature provides for the seeker, you pause to rest on the summit of some hill, perched upon the highest point that you may catch the last gleams of light and gain a new view of the countryside in the purple glow; at peace with yourself and all mankind, your mind filled with spicy odors and the songs of birds, of woodland visits and meadow stretches, of alluring white road, reaching miles and miles beyond, ribboning the hills and plains; with neat farm houses speaking of home comfort and family cheer dotting the wayside. As you take a mental inventory of all this store of knowledge and beauty, you feel a new vigor springing up within you, your heart sings for joy and you realize it is good to be alive and an understanding part of nature.

If at such a time, too weary to talk, you rest your elbows upon your knees and your head upon your hands, sort of drowsy like and become a part of the landscape, many a scene will be enacted before you by our friends in feathers and fur.

As Donald and I so rested last Sunday, we watched a night-hawk teaching her awkward gray hawklets to fly. She had evidently taken the hour when the night silence draws nigh with nothing to detract from her instruction, so patiently and forcibly given; plainly a first lesson, with little progress made. She would swoop down upon them as though she would carry them up in her beak, then suspend herself just above the surface, as though saying: "See how easy it is to fly;" then fly far above them as though illustrating the pleasure and freedom of flying. Her efforts were tireless and when at last we arose to go, her warning call flattened her young to the ground where it was impossible to distinguish them from the rocky, gray surface, while she soared away into the sky far above our heads, harshly reproving us for interrupting her maternal duties.

The human element, as well, of valley and hill is only realized by the trumper. The red brick house at the foot of the hill, surrounded by sweet-smelling, up-standing pines, with its apple orchard reaching to the very door in the rear, whose wealth of pink-tipped blossoms—if you chance that way in spring—carries you into fairyland, grips you and suspends your breath with its intense, unconscious beauty; and, perhaps, you pause to chat with the owner at the gate, or to drink the fresh, foamy buttermilk so hospitably offered by the farmer's wife, the atmosphere breathing of toil and well-earned rest, of contentment and peace. You

forget for the moment the feverish unrest of the streets and the problems awaiting your return.

Or, perchance, on Sunday morning, you pass the white country church, with its fringe of horses and vehicles which have brought their loads of men, women and children for the pleasures of their one day of rest, to meet their neighbors, to talk over the crop prospects, the gardens, the best breed of hens, and all the varied things with which they deal who live near to nature ; to listen to the soothing tones of the organ and a word of cheer from the minister, if his disposition be one that radiates sunshine. And as you proceed, you pass a little schoolhouse, a store at the cross-roads, a sawmill, silent and decaying because its commercial teeth have converted into lumber all the trees worth while. Then just at the turn of the road, a long, low rambling board house, whose style and weather-beaten sides proclaim years of habitation, while just at the foot of the slope is the gray stone spring house, fragrant with mint ; and if you are one of the favored walkers, who finds his way to the heart of the country folks with the golden key of understanding of nature's joys, you may peep into this cool retreat, perchance be served with a draught of the delicious white beverage from one of the brown crocks around which the water continually swirls and gurgles its soft refrain.

Compare these pleasures with the feverish charm of the rushing motorist, gliding so rapidly from one scene to another, past multitudes of objects but half

conceived, like a "bird's eye view" of a city, with no realization of the beauty and interest contained therein, until one is exhilarated to exhaustion and the mind deadened to impression of scene. Not that I would banish from our civilization so useful an adjunct as the motor, but I would prevent it from making of our limbs simply pedestals upon which to stand, and add one more attraction to woo the idle woman into neurasthenia, and that strangest of anomalies — the rest cure — the ills of an aimless life cured by more nothingness.

Donald says Nature in all her moods gives him courage and inspiration, courage to fight the monstrous evils that constantly confront one in the city streets and byways and trail their slimy lengths through a lawyer's office, pleading with their bleary, sin-filled eyes to be covered over with the mantle of charity, and pointing with their stinging tails to glittering piles of gold as recompense for this protection. Inspiration to know subtle ways that are right with which to meet and overcome these horrors that are gnawing at the vitals of our civilization; and, as on a hot, choking, suffering day, a sharp electric storm is needed to clear the atmosphere and make breathing and living sweet, "So," he says, "is a holocaust of reform and overturning necessary to make living safe and sane."

Donald has many visions of better government, "visions," he says, "which are founded on faith in humanity, without which no advancement is suc-

cess." He thinks that only as we live a life of service, as we strive to better conditions and help our fellow-man, do we become worthy citizens. And with his dreams he is practical and patient. He has the genius to make the entering wedge, the tact to insert it gently and the patience to watch and wait, with now and then a tap until the severing is made, and the two parts, the good and the evil, stand apart in battle array. Then he hesitates no longer but rushes into the fray, ready to battle for the right, and seldom does he fail.

Has his wooing been the same? As I write, the conviction comes upon me that it has. I don't believe that I could have put him out of my life after he realized that I was the woman he desired for a wife. He surrounded me with a wall of emotion, of intense affection, that I was made to feel was his very life. I knew it was — that was the man.

It is easier to yield than to resist, and yet the yielding does not bring me happiness. I am restless. I am feverish. I am ill at ease. Always and always there is a feeling of a greater demand than I can give. I feel the force of a dominating spirit that sways me, and I fear.

CHAPTER IV

JULY.

WE had a most delightful celebration yesterday in my garden — a party of friends from the City came out to spend the day with me and my flowers. Nothing pleases my old housekeeper quite so much as a houseful of guests to feed and make comfortable; she and Jack are in their element at such times. Jack goes about with his yellow plume in perpetual motion, distributing his smiles in an impartial manner, like the genial host that he is. But Topsy, resenting any intrustion on her personal comfort, seeks her high perch, a sunny window, which she frequents for warmth and seclusion, and from the heights, like an empty-headed beauty, looks down with disdain and suspicion on those below.

How often "the most sacred shrine of our soul is invaded, dominated, profaned" by the outer world, even by our world of friends. Donald and I furnished much amusement. We were made the butt of all the practical jokes, just because we chanced to be the latest pledged to marriage.

Why do we cling to these barbarous customs that have come down to us from the ages when our ancestors were emerging from heathenism —

treating a man and a maid like toys, like vaudeville actors, simply because they have announced their intention of spending the rest of their lives together, around a sacred new hearth fire called home? Just when they are tingling with new emotions, with tenderness of the new relation and all it means, lifted beyond the material into a land of beautiful visions, where they two, swayed by this divine passion, will build a world of their own, and from this strong citadel, send out an influence that will better humanity? Into this dream of sweetness and beauty and helpfulness are constantly hurled jibes and rude jests, coarsely suggesting that marriage is only a union of bodies. Is it strange that marriage is so often a mockery?

We had a grand display of fireworks in the evening; so brilliant were we, in fact, that we drove Jack into his place of concealment, under the porch, from which he came later with every sign of intense humility, his eyes mutely begging my pardon for deserting me in time of peril.

Dear Special Friend came in during the evening to add dignity to the occasion. We all love to have her with us; she carries such an atmosphere of peace and joyousness; she seems to have an inward fountain of sweetness and wisdom into which she dips at will and scatters broadcast, as a flower its fragrance.

Donald remained after the others had gone and we had our first snarl. I will not call it a quarrel — I

do not think Donald and I will ever stoop to quarrel. I was irritated by his assumption of ownership — an "all mine" attitude; and he was irritated by my kindness to "Billy." Dear old Billy, the best friend a girl ever had. He is years older than I and has always been my authority on all things. I just as naturally refer to him as the sunflower looks at the sun. He is one of the few men with whom a girl may be on friendly terms, knowing he will not ask to be a lover. He has been loyal to a little lonely grave in the mountains for the past twenty years, and ever since he opened this chapter of his life for me to read I have felt very near to him, and have endeavored to provide him with home comforts. He calls me "Heartsease," I think, chiefly because I allow him to sit for hours in my parlor or garden smoking, reading or thinking, without uttering a word — allow him to wholly forget my presence.

And tonight — that silly Donald — just because, in the exhilaration of the crowd and the joyousness of us all, I stood on tiptoe and pretended to kiss Billy good night — anyone could see it was a farce — but Donald was angry, I never thought of my new relation until, looking up, I caught the sudden glitter in Donald's eyes, and then — I was angry. They all know what chums Billy and I are.

After they were all gone Donald sat there without saying a word, just to show me his displeasure; and I sat and hummed, just to show him that I didn't care. But I never can keep quiet long — I'm always

putting myself on record and, consequently, at a disadvantage. Instead of sitting quietly until he apologized, I threw a rose at him. He never smiled, but in a tragic way, said: "Come here, Katheryne," and I, like a naughty child, went, standing humbly before him. He held my hands a moment, then drew me convulsively to him, almost with a sob: "Oh, darling, darling, don't play with me; I can't endure it."

"Play with you, goosie," I said, "why, you old innocent, Billy is the best friend I have; he is to be God-father to all our children; he has asked that privilege."

He could not help smiling at this nonsense and manifesting a little humility for his jealousy. "I will try to be a little less selfish, dear, but I may as well confess that I have always felt a little sense of envy of Billy's relation with you and I still feel so uncertain of you that to see another man touch you maddens me. We men are still very much like the beasts of the forest, ready to battle for the woman we have chosen for our mate. Forgive me, Katheryne, dear."

"On one condition," I replied.

"Anything, Katheryne, anything to gain absolution, only make it easy; I'm not very strong where you are concerned."

"Then promise me, that you will never again question my attitude toward Billy; he has been my mentor and dear friend too long to give him the

cold shoulder now. Promise, Donald, promise me that you will hereafter hold your peace where he is concerned."

"I won't promise, Katheryne, but I'll try. Remember I'm only a weak man and be merciful!"

"You are a blind man, I know," I replied, "but as you are *my* man I will be lenient, and let me remind you that if you reach home before the moon disappears, you will have to hasten."

"Goodnight, then, Dear Heart, 'till tomorrow," he said.

"And tomorrow is here," I replied, as the clock chimed out its slow, melodious twelve strokes.

THIS compelling, intense love — can I satisfy it? I am proud to have inspired such a love from such a man, but will my calmer affection fill his life and dreams? Will his love remain tender when not returned in kind? This perplexity, this questioning makes my head dizzy and my heart sick with dire foreboding.

INTERMEZZO

“ Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments; love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds.”



CHAPTER V

JULY.

DONALD telephoned me this morning early that he had been called to a distant city on business and could not come out even to say goodbye. There was such passionate regret in his voice when he said this that I sent him a kiss over the 'phone. He said that my kisses were such rare things that he would prize one which flew through the air, even. I am to write every day, which, he said, would be some compensation for the two weeks' absence — that he would have actual words from my pen to look at again and again, which would be better than "just memories."

Donald's letters will be all they should be, I know. I rather think I shall enjoy them more than Donald, himself. It was almost with a sense of relief that I hung up the receiver. Two whole weeks to myself — to do just as I please! Not but that I always do as I think best, but somehow, of late, a feeling has crept in that I hardly understand, that I cannot name; fear seems too harsh a word to use, yet the feeling is akin to it. Donald has such austere ideals, he seems to weigh each word. I have

observed that when he speaks people always listen — his words bear weight; while I so often speak impulsively. I love to toss a subject back and forth to see how much batting it will stand, before it discovers itself either hollow, or reveals the golden kernel within. Naturally this handling of a topic brings forth many thoughtless remarks of which I begin to feel Donald's mental criticism. He feels that one should think a subject out quietly by himself. But why try to explain what I do not understand myself! I only know there is a mental jar that seems to have developed since our engagement. There is a big joyous side to my nature; I love sunshine and sunny people; I love those about me who draw me out, as the sun draws the blossom from the bud. Oh, well, if it is true that man and woman are required to make a perfect whole, perhaps Donald is just the balance wheel I need!

BILLY came out this afternoon, the dear fellow, that he is — thought I might be lonely with Donald away. As usual in pleasant weather, we were sitting in my arbor, I on my favorite stone bench with a book, with Topsy curled up at my side; Jack, of course, at my feet; Billy in a chair near by smoking, and I, supposed, reading. By one of those strange, telepathic signs, I looked up to find Billy's eyes fixed upon me. As he was just in line with Jack, I could but observe that both had the same devotion, loyalty and love in their glance.

Still steadily looking at me, he said abruptly, "Katheryne, do you love Donald?"

"Why, you saucy fellow," I cried, springing from my bench and overturning Topsy in my haste, "I have a great mind to hurl this book at you! How dare you ask such a question of an engaged young woman?" And I stretched myself to my full height and stood with a dignified air before him.

"I am not jesting, Katheryne," he said, still with that steady, devoted gaze straight into my eyes; "you well know I would not use levity on such a subject; this is a serious question, dear, and I want the truth."

"Oh, Billy, even you haven't the right to ask that question," I pleaded, as I dropped down at his knee. He laid his hand, oh so tenderly, on my head:

"I have wanted to talk to you for sometime, Heartsease, but have hardly known how to begin, or what to say. You and I have talked of many things. I am almost old enough to be your father, and being alone, as you are, you have appealed to me and in our talks I have tried to instruct you as I would a daughter. With all your years, you are still a child at heart. You have always seemed to live above the sordid things of life. I have always admired the confidence you possessed in your own ability, your manner of taking care of yourself, your faith in humanity. You possess these gifts because you have lived close to nature and have not wasted your heart on frivolities; but these very conditions might

lead you astray in your marriage. I would keep you always as you are, dear; I would save you from disillusionment, if possible."

My eyes opened wide in surprise. "Why, Billy," I exclaimed in wonder, "who is borrowing trouble now! You are not in the habit of building up straw men just for the pleasure of knocking them down. Where have you found this dream fabric out of which to weave so unpleasant a vision?"

He gave me no answering smile, but with his earnest eyes still fixed upon my face, continued: "You and I have often discussed Eugenics, Katheryne. I never was much impressed with the doctrine myself; there are some truths in its teaching that it would be well to ponder, but when it is carried to the extent that the old Greeks practiced of mating for physical perfection, we cannot measure the harm it is doing—the crippling of generations unborn—and, Katheryne, I have observed that you have taken the science of Engenics—if it is a science—in a very serious way."

"How could I help it," I exclaimed, "after watching the wizard next door! He makes of his flowers just what he pleases, changes their form, their color, their character; lifts a humble little nothing of a plant that has no standing whatever in the flower world into a place of dignity, and almost of necessity, in the garden. To say nothing of the great strides of progress made in the animal kingdom—and are we not animals?"

“Yes,” Billy said, with twinkling eyes, “but thinking animals. In the betterment of the human race we are not working for avoirdupois or color or speed or production; no, nor are we striving for greater beauty or fragrance, as in the flower world; or for greater utility as in the seedless fruits; but for well balanced men and women, men and women whose brain and heart work in unison, and work for the brotherhood of man. The perfect physique, the external things, will right themselves when the mentality is perfectly adjusted.”

“And now, Katheryne, we come back to our starting point. I do not wish to force your confidence, nor hurt you—you well know that, dear”—as I arose and turned my back upon him—“don’t turn from me; I have so much I want to say to you—I know I’m awkward about it;”—here Jack thrust his head under my hand, knowing I was troubled—“but I’m only a lonely old bachelor,”—he knew I could not resist that, and I returned to my place at his knee.

“You know, Katheryne, you have thought so seriously of the children you are destined to bear, of the great responsibility of motherhood, that I fear, sometimes, you forget your own rights; and dare I say it, child, the rights of their father. You must never lose sight of the fact that a father and mother have their own particular duties to perform, their service to humanity to render, wholly aside from bringing new lives into the world, and this

service can only be rendered in its entirety when husband and wife are working in perfect harmony. Perfect children will come only with mental harmony. And, dear, this condition exists only when both are swayed by an undying love, the love that has more of tenderness than thought of self."

"Oh, Billy," I broke in, "you make me a little tired; my head buzzes and aches."

"Be patient yet a little longer, dear, for I have not yet told you all that I started to say and it will lay heavy on my conscience if left unsaid. I have watched you and Donald since you announced your engagement, and Donald, as you know, is to me one of God's noblemen, the finest young fellow I have ever known; and there is no question of his love for you. He is carried away by your beauty, your sweetness, your charm of homemaking — but, is it the same with you, Katheryne? No, don't run away. I must make you think. Are your temperaments suited to each other? Do you love him as much as you are capable of loving? Don't do Donald the injustice of giving him half a woman and thus spoil all your beautiful plans for life."

"Oh, I don't know; I don't know," I sobbed, "but I won't listen any more," and I rushed to the house with my hands over my ears and into my room and locked the door, where, flinging myself upon my bed, I sobbed and sobbed, angry with Billy and Donald and myself, and with the feeling that the world had all gone wrong and I knew of no way to read-

just it. Why should Billy add this weight to my perplexities? I finally fell into a fitful sleep, only to start into life again with a raging headache.

Here, Dear Special Friend came knocking at my door. I could not bar her out; I rose to admit her. She did not remark upon my distressed face, but like the wizard that she is, bade me lie down again; seating herself beside me, she held my hand and gave me of her own particular wisdom until I was soothed, my headache gone and I could again see some brightness in life. And — of course, a promise made must be kept.

CHAPTER VI

JULY.

I AWAKENED this morning to an indigo day ; my sky is overcast ; great, black overhanging clouds obscure the brightness. I am sure this cloud is without a silver lining, and I am also sure that the sun staid in China last night. Poor heathen, they need it ! Yet, why should I say that ? They are no more heathen than are we — they are consistent, at least ; they have a barbarous religion and follow it to the letter, while we have an ideal religion and follow it out only in form, purely theoretical. We quibble and snarl and fence over creeds and doctrines, giving little thought to the great things Jesus taught and practiced. No wonder that a great army of people have come to feel as I do — indifferent to the Bible, with a big doubt arising as to whether there ever was such a man as Jesus. The Bible has given us some beautiful fairy tales, but if we cannot apply the theory to our every day problems, of what benefit are they to mankind and what right have we to teach them as religion ?

Margaret says that " to live truth daily, to let our lives speak for our doctrine, to take our religion into business and social life, is better than volumes of

theories and bears more weight than all the sermons ever preached." Even I, skeptic that I am, can see the logic of this. If all our professed christians followed such a course, this world would be a Paradise.

But again, the question arises, what is truth? We have so many standards of good that for one person to assert that a certain thing is truth is like throwing a pebble into a pool of calm water. Immediately a commotion arises, the disturbed waters seek to bring themselves back to their original calm, but not until circles within circles have formed, each striving for the inner place, ever widening until they disappear from the surface, does the water assume its seeming smoothness.

And that is what Billy did to my apparent calm the other day — threw a whole handful of pebbles, and the surface hasn't calmed yet; and the question ever confronts me, what is the truth of my own special problem? Billy called me up the next morning.

I never knew him so heartless and so hard on me; he began just where he left off the day before. "I want you to ponder well what I said to you yesterday, Katheryne." "I won't!" I almost shouted at him, "and I won't listen to you again, and don't dare come to me until I send for you," and I rang off before he could answer. But, for all my impatience, I am thinking, thinking, thinking, until the black, unlined clouds are so close about me I can

scarcely breathe, but no one else can help me think, not even Billy. No one has any right in this controversy but Donald and I—and “God,” Dear Special Friend would say—but I haven’t saved any space in my thoughts for Him. When I did reserve a room away back in my childhood, He just kept the door locked and wouldn’t let me get near Him—issued orders through the key-hole and never recognized the fact that I didn’t understand them. No, He can’t come to the council, and not even Donald can demand admittance yet—so, it’s my heart and I.

We will go into the garden; perhaps my roses will give me a glimpse into the future, they seem so joyous; each little tender sprout pushing its way along so confidently, never interfering with each other, always seeming to know just where to go, and how. But after all it is only an optical illusion, as is so much that the eye seems to comprehend. The little branch has nothing to do with the harmony and activity, neither the beautiful blossoms; they are simply automatons, directed by the strong, vigorous roots beneath. Even so are our hands and feet and tongue and heart—little servants to mind.

’Tis ever so—the motive, the power is out of sight. Truly, the things that are seen are not so great, so wonderful, so real as the hidden things.

No, little rose, you have given me of your fragrance, your philosophy, but no surcease from heart-ache or headache.

Oh, you dear old chum, Jack, sitting there on your haunches, with a face like a patriarch, waiting for me to approach you! Yes, I understand what your smile says—"There is a bed of rare plants between us which you have forbidden me to cross, so pardon my not coming to meet you." With his clear cut face and sparkling eyes he looks the embodiment of wisdom. "Oh, old boy," I cry, as I take his head in my arms, "can't you solve riddles with your great heart of love and loyalty?"—but he only wags his tail understandingly and looks at me with eyes of devotion. He is such a gentleman; he knows I do not like kisses and never annoys me by touching my face—and we pass on to watch the tiny gold fish as they scamper to the surface to look at us with their cold eyes and beg for food with their little snout-like mouths wide open, a trap wisely provided by nature to catch any particles floating about. They know that only once in a great many times do they receive food when they come begging, still, from habit they come in their fruitless search—like the minister who makes long prayers while we sit with bowed heads until our necks ache fit to break with the strain and we become numb, holding ourselves so intensely quiet to be sure that he leaves no one out. For the long-winded prayer is a fearful and wonderful thing; it reaches to the heights and depths of the sea, to the ends and breadths of the earth and extends over the horizon to catch any that may be fleeing. No one and no

place, nothing is forgotten — and our necks ache on, and after we have become convinced that no one will be omitted, we cease to think about the prayer, ease our necks a little and wish we had remained at home with the author, who is trying to help humanity solve the great social problems confronting us.

Can it be, with all this nonsensical wandering, that I am trying to evade the question forever surging in my brain?

As I gaze into the water and see how Jack's visage and my own are distorted and enlarged, I wonder if I am not looking through an enlarging and distorting vista at my own problems — a woman's morbid fears, Billy's over-cautiousness, a romantic temperament, a dreamer's vision of an ideal life.

Here the postman brought me a letter from Donald; thus it ran:

“ My own Dear Little Maid :

“ Are you dreaming of me tonight, as you should? It is late, after midnight. I have a trying client here and I sat late with him tonight, trying to convince him of the wisdom of my ways; but late as it is, I cannot sleep until I have had a one-sided chat with you.

“ First, I want to inform you that you need special training in writing love letters — such matter-of-fact missives!

“ I omitted from my demand of a daily letter

that quantity alone would not suffice, they must have quality as well. So far you have obeyed the letter but not the spirit. If I were your brother, Katheryne, your letters would be most delightful, so full of news and scenes and weather, but I am a long way from being your brother—I am your most ardent lover, darling, and care only to hear of you and of how much you care for me.

“ You have seemed away off from me since I came here; a mist seems to hang between. I can get no clear thought of you, not even of your bonnie face, unless I consult the little card that rests in my pocket, very near to my heart. I fear you are not sending wireless messages of love, as I bade you. You have become life itself to me, darling. With you gone it would only be existence; all sparkle would vanish — all incentive to accomplish.

“ I have been so absorbed in business since coming here. I am working on a case that I must win — not only from a standpoint of right but that I may feather a nest with softest down for my dear little wife. I have had to keep every faculty alert to meet the arguments of these brilliant men, so much older than myself. Yet, every instant, even when presenting my case to the jury, there was always that undercurrent of joy that sent my blood leaping through my veins, with the song, ‘ Katheryne is mine, is mine; she is wait-

ing for me; she will soon be my wife.' The thought is like wine in the blood; it is inspiration; it gives wings to thought and burning words of truth to the tongue.

"This is such a beautiful city, Katheryne, with the mountains all about it. Nothing forbidding and unapproachable, as in some parts of the Rockies, but Nature, in her softest, most persuasive moods, beautiful beyond description!

"With your love of nature, dear, you would be wildly excited. And, darling, do you know what I am thinking all the time? This is just the place for our honeymoon. I must return in September — can't you be ready to come with me, sweetheart?

"Oh, dear, dear girl! As I write these words, the thought arises in spite of the emotion that thrills and sways me, what if there should be no honeymoon for Katheryne and me? The thought unmans me and I know I would not care to live if you were not to be a part of my life.

"Write to me, dear, just the kind of a letter I want. Put your sweet self into it. Allay these terrible fears that arise in spite of myself.

"With all the love of my heart,

"DONALD."

I will consider no longer. I have no right to spoil a man's life; and this love is no dream, no passing infatuation with such a man as Donald. No

man attracts me half so much. Why should I question? Why should I not marry him and be happy, too. I will be ready in September — but, oh, how my head throbs and aches!

CHAPTER VII

AUGUST.

FOR many days life has been a blank. I have been very ill with a low fever, to which the doctors gave no name. The case baffled them. Organically I was in perfect condition, they said, but they could not check the fever.

Had they a machine with which to measure not only the heartbeats, but the mental cause, the emotions, they would have pronounced my case one of internal conflict instead of fever — head versus heart.

The medical world is a wide field in which to work. Examples of noble, self-sacrificing lives are numbered by thousands within its realm. Physicians bear great responsibility and strain. Even with the support of professional ethics it must be a constant "dagger of the mind" to make the decisions of life and death for the millions who pause before them for judgment.

To those thoughtful enough to read the signs of the times, in the white light of the ever increasing knowledge of man and his possibilities, the great physician of the future is portrayed as a student of character, rather than of physic and knives.

The growing meekness with which we yield up parts of our anatomy is tragedy. It is well to allow natural laws to take their course, to attune one's self to nature. Nature cannot change her system for man, but man can put himself in touch with her when she will be a great restorer; she constantly appeals to the earth children, with her essence of certainty. Do they need rest? She will cuddle them in her arms of soothing silence; she will lull them to sleep with the songs of the whispering leaves; she will open up vistas of beauty, before undreamed of, both for their mental and physical eye.

Nature is never idle, never monotonous; ever accomplishing, ever changing. She will transform your apathy into activity; she will arouse in you a desire to accomplish, to overcome. If you approach her without prejudice, with an open mind, she will cleanse and clear your mentality, possibly your body. It is a venture in health well worth the effort.

BUT I have wandered far away from my little self. I have no recollection after reading Donald's letter — they found me fainting, by the aquarium in the garden. Not since childhood had I been sick before; never had I fainted. I awakened from this faint only to rave and fight phantoms. Donald came but I would not have him near me; and Billy could not come inside my room; only Dear Special Friend could soothe me. So, I raved and tossed and

fought until exhausted, when I lay weak and the physicians said, dying.

Then Margaret put them all out of my room. I could feel myself sinking, sinking, oblivion closing over me and I did not care. But she held my hand, she would not let me go. She talked of God; she repeated the prayer I had learned at my mother's knee; she repeated the Psalms I had heard in Sunday School when a wee girl. Over and over again I faintly heard the emphatic denial, "*There is no death. God is the only power.*"

Then gradually I could feel a peace, a calmness stealing over me, the shadows receded and, instead of oblivion, a gentle sleep descended. I slept for many hours and awoke in my right mind. And now, less than three weeks since that unhappy day, with the wonderful recuperative power of youth, I am almost well — rather shadowy looking from my weeks of prostration, and shaky as though just learning to walk, but I feel the elixir of life springing within me, and I feel that it is good to be alive.

We spent the afternoon in the garden. They were all so dear and so foolish about me. They would not let me walk, but those two silly men, Donald and Billy, made a chair of their hands as we used to do when we were children, and with Jack running ahead with his joyous, ecstatic barks, carried me out in state, swathed in shawls, and placed me in the most comfortable chair the house affords, instead of on my stone perch that I love so well, and

made me keep quiet when I felt like shouting and running.

As I looked into the faces of those three precious friends, Margaret, Donald and Billy, looking down upon me with eyes of love and trust and devotion, my own eyes filled with tears and I stretched my arms to them in mute gratitude for all their tender care. They clasped my hands lovingly, knowing well the words I could not speak.

Ruskin tells us that he who can count one friend through fair and stormy weather, is blessed; and here am I, unworthy as I am, with three ready to do my bidding. Remembering that quiet hour when Dear Special Friend held my hand and would not let me go over the Great Divide, I said under my breath, truly a "friend is the masterpiece of Nature."

I say "three friends." How could I be so heedless of the feelings of my faithful Jack? I should have said four. He was like a wild thing all the time we were in the garden; I feared for my plants. I heard Mike threatening incarceration in the tool house — the worst thing that can befall him; but for once that dire threat was without effect; he kept one eye on me, one on Mike, and continued his joyous yelps.

Oh, it has been such a happy day! The garden was never so beautiful! This is the glory season of the flowers and after my long confinement in the house, its beauty thrilled me like wine. It was al-

most as hard for me to keep quiet as for Jack, but with the guard about me, ready to assert their authority, I was forced to remain in my chair.

Donald's eyes were ever upon me and out of sheer joy of living, I smiled into them again and again, and saw his lips form the words, "my darling."

Margaret had her work, Billy a book; and being in an argumentative state of mind and no one willing to leave the Lotus dream to combat him, he argued with the author, giving us many of the writer's views, and then his own — much to our amusement. He soon tired of that, however, and started in to arouse Margaret, whom he dearly loves to draw out. "Listen to this, Miss Margaret," he challenged; "here is an author as positive as yourself. After exhorting us to be 'every moment masters of ourselves' Charbonnel asserts that 'there is no more limit to the gratification of a right desire than there is to the air we breathe.' The question that arises in my mind is, how are we to decide what are right desires; to wish for a thing is generally conceded sufficient reason to call it a right desire."

"Let Mind decide," answers Dear Special Friend, her eyes brightening.

"But there are minds many, my dear Miss Margaret."

"There is but one Mind," she replied in her positive way.

"There you go, Lady Margaret, with one of your ultimatums. And how, 'one mind'?" Billy ques-

tioned. "For instance, here are four minds, not including Jack's — very positive minds, too, I assure you, and each one would have very decided views as to what are right desires."

"We are all reflections of one Supreme Mind, which is God," Margaret asserted conclusively. "When we admit this great truth and allow this principle to govern our lives, we know when our desires are right. We submit them to God. If they are selfish, unkind or malicious, we are quickly warned by the Voice within, and strive to destroy the wrong thought. We know positively by this test when our desires are right and sanctioned by God; and Charbonnel is right — there is no limit to such desires," she smiled into Billy's quizzical eyes.

"I yield the floor, Dear Special Friend," he laughed. "When you begin to expound your philosophy, you leave no room for whys and wherefores, but at one fell swoop say '*it is so.*' I might quote Reid: 'By the mind of a man we understand that in him which thinks, remembers, wills;' or Spencer: 'Mind consists of feelings and the relations among feelings' — and many other notable scholars on mind; but your one authority would override them all, because, as you say, you have proven the *rightness* of your assertion."

"Yes," she said seriously; "the mind to which you refer is mortal mind, confined in this thing we call brain — which is ever vibrating between two

extremes, rest and unrest, which is not intelligence and must be subdued to Divine Mind, which does not reside in brain, and which transmits right thoughts and destroys error, before desires are right and results are as we would have them. Then man can truly say, 'My mind is my kingdom.'"

"Then, according to your theory," Billy exclaimed, "we have the power to determine the kind of thoughts we will think!"

"Most assuredly. We can decide the kind of thoughts we will entertain as positively as we can decide the food we will serve for dinner."

"This sounds much like the tale of Fortunatus, and I would gladly embrace your doctrine, if it can do all you claim for it."

"It can, it does, Mr. Saunders. I know from experience. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard the wonderful things prepared by God for man. Perhaps I can give you a clearer conception of the modus operandi of thought control by continuing the same homely simile. The young housekeeper, giving orders for her dinner for the first time, will find many difficulties confronting her. She must learn the relation foods bear to each other, the time for preparation and cooking and a multitude of details that only time and experience can teach her. Even so with the student of thought forces. It requires more time than a college education, and the patience of Job, to be 'ever master of one's self,' to think the thoughts that are good for all mankind and

shut out the evil thoughts that are ever striving for entrance to our mentality; but it means control of the body as well as the mind; it means life, health and happiness."

"I fear you would have many lapses," Billy said, skeptically, "and many hours of discouragement, before the goal was reached."

"Quite true," Margaret replied. "Discouragement is the greatest enemy we have to progress. I like the illustration given in the old fable, of the devil's imps that were sent out to trap a man who was doing much good in the world through the habit of right thinking. They were given instruction to use all their tricks and schemes and beguilements. They worked upon him secretly for many days, without result, and at last, gave him up as a hopeless case. Finally, they were summoned before his satanic majesty to account for their failure. 'We tried him,' they reported, 'with every device known to your highness; with riches and poverty; with pleasure and pain; with success and failure; with sickness and health, but without avail; we could not move him.' 'Let me see your tools,' demanded the devil. He looked them over and counted a full assortment of mental hooks and saws and hammers and magnets and wrenches, used by evil to uncouple men from their sense of right. But one of the usual outfit was missing. 'Where is your wedge?' he cried in a rage. 'How could you expect to get hold of a man who holds fast to his habits of right

thinking? You must first pry him loose with your old reliable wedge.' And he handed them an old and much worn tool, a wedge that had seen much service, marked in small letters, 'Discouragement.' 'Take that,' said the devil, 'and if that does not get him started our way, nothing ever will.' "

" You surely discourage any arguments I have in store to combat your philosophy," Billy laughed. " And, begging your pardon, not to change the subject, but to perform duty, do you see that sun just dropping off the world, and this invalid with the dewdrops all about her? Come, Donald, you have gazed at Katheryne quite long enough—" as the color flew to my cheeks—" see, her roses have returned! "

I was again lifted and borne into the house where I was deposited on my couch and given orders to remain until the next morning.

" Oh, dearest," Donald whispered, as he bent over me, " I cannot tell you how happy I am to have you almost well again." I ran my fingers through his glossy hair and patted his brown cheek so near my own, all foreboding for the moment gone; the exhilaration of the open air, of returning health, was in my veins.

" It seems good to think of belonging to you to-night, dear," I said softly from the friendly shadow of his broad shoulders.

" Do you mean it, Katheryne?" he cried, with deep drawn breath.

“Truly,” I laughed; “I think Margaret’s lecture sent my thoughts into right channels.”

“Be sure that you keep them there; that part of Margaret’s philosophy would be of great benefit to you. And now you must sleep, my girl.” And pressing his lips gently on my own, he bade me good night.

CHAPTER VIII

AUGUST.

ALL day long the rain has fallen steadily and that depressing old couplet, "Into each life some rain must fall, some days be dark and dreary," has rung constantly in my ears.

I am almost well; the health-glow is bounding through my veins. Donald and I have spent a long evening in front of the fire — such a cozy, homelike scene! Topsy asleep on the hearth and Jack stretched out at our feet, with only an occasional lift of the eye, or a soft tap of his tail to assure us that he is listening, in spite of the fact that he seems to be sleeping.

We two before the hearth, with only the soft glow of the firelight to illumine the whole!

I LOVE this library of mine which has in it all my most loved, most cherished possessions — my books, my best pictures, my friends' portraits, and all the little trophies I have collected in my travels at home and abroad! This dear room that has had but few changes — except to add more treasures — since mother came here, a bride; and I am so happy to-

night to know that this house and this dear old room will be my home all through life.

Donald has at last consented to make my home his. It has taken many pleadings on my part to bring him to this decision, and I fear now it comes more because I have been ill and he wanted my consent to a September wedding than from his best judgment. Men are so queer! Now, here is this comfortable old house with its beautiful garden, and only Sarah, Mike and myself to occupy it, and yet Donald has felt that he must supply our home, which would be a heavy tax just at this time when he is establishing himself in his profession. But this fact, notwithstanding, he has been quite cross when I talked of his coming to me, and did not yield tonight with much grace. I was too happy to gain any kind of consent to complain of the manner of it, however.

Man can't help this feeling of independence toward the woman of his choice; he has been the provider for too many generations to take kindly to financial aid from his wife. Of course, we have fortune hunters who feel differently, but they don't count, when we talk of men. It is a truly beautiful tribute our suitors pay to us, as Donald said: "It is only the woman I love that I want and not her worldly possessions. I would rather live in a flat of two rooms than come to your house; it makes me feel like a dependent." Then he saw how selfish that would be and that he wasn't thinking of me at

all, but only of himself and the public — a little bit of the spirit of the cave man. All forceful men are, unconsciously, masterful with the woman they love. He saw his attitude, however, after I had overthrown every argument he brought forth, he apologized humbly, and at last consented to my plans. I am so happy over it that I want to shout and dance.

YES, my wedding day is settled. I am to be married September 20th — Donald and I, for weal or woe.

I FELT that I could not go to Donald without making one last effort to let him know that my love did not equal his own. I attempted to give him an insight into my thoughts tonight, to tell him as much as I know myself, which is very little — my heart still remains a mystery to me. And when I tried to tell him all this he took me fiercely in his arms and stopped my mouth with passionate kisses.

“Yes, I know,” he said, with deep drawn breath. “I have known something of this all the time. When a man loves as I love you, Katheryne, he cannot be deceived. I thought it only shyness at first, a woman’s instinctive impulse to hide her love; and then — when your aloofness remained — when you never came to me of your own choice — never yielded yourself to me as a woman yields who loves supremely — I knew. When you were ill, your ravings, your attitude toward me, revealed much.

When I realized why you were delirious, tossing with fever, it nearly maddened me and I thought I would go away and never see you again. But I could not, Katheryne, I simply could not."

"But, Donald, suppose I never am able to love you in the way you desire," I plead, eager to have him read my heart, wishing to conceal nothing from him; "would your love remain the same? Are you unselfish enough to always give a double portion and be satisfied with my calmer affection? It was this great fear that prostrated me, that filled me with fever, and the feeling that to give up and die was the best thing for us both. What if you awaken to a heart-hunger some day that will not be quieted—that, finding no response in me, will turn to feed upon itself and so destroy all?"

"You do not love anyone else?" he questioned suddenly, sharply.

"No, Donald, no. You know that. No man has ever aroused in me the love I believed existed between man and woman—the love for which I have waited. I have always believed that the love which sanctioned marriage would so sway and master me that it could not be resisted; but such love has never touched me and I wonder if it exists in me, and if it does, Donald—if it does and comes too late, what would we do, dear? These are the questions that have torn me for weeks, that sapped all my strength."

"Let us think quietly of this, Katheryne," Donald

said after a time, holding my hands in his, and soothing me with gentle touches. "You are all in a tremor, girl; sit quiet here and let me think for you for a time. Any great decision causes agitation and unrest. I admit the possibility of all the fears that have mastered you, and I am not unselfish enough to be satisfied with your friendly kisses — they have almost made me lose heart, almost destroyed the joy of the thought of possessing you. But, dear, you will be my wife, bound to me by the strongest tie and so I am willing to take my chances against any other man awakening you. Then we must not lose sight of the fact that woman's love compared to man's is as moonbeams compared to sunlight. I have love enough for us both until your heart yields its treasure to me, and I will be so tender of you, dear, that you must, perforce, love me in return. Can't you trust me, Katheryne?"

"Yes, Donald, more than I trust myself; but I cannot be sure that woman's love is subordinate to man's. Passion may not sway her so helplessly, but love, Donald — the love that lives on after passion is stilled — which should grow into tenderness beyond expression, as two lives become one! I have always felt that woman's affections should far surpass man's; the demands upon her love are so much greater; it is her privilege to bear the fruits of love, and — oh, it is so hard to understand it all — to tell you just how it seems to me. Marriage is such an

irrevocable step ; and — I know, if you were disappointed in me as a wife, I should want to die ! ”

“ You have brooded over this delusion, child, until you are morbid,” Donald said, tenderly. “ Come, cast it off ; be my own brave girl ; give me a kiss that will send me into the dark night with sunshine in my heart.”

“ Oh, Donald ! ” I exclaimed, laying my arms about his neck and holding him close. “ I will take your word for it and put all my fears from me ; and, dear Laddie, may I ever be the sunshine of your life ! ”

And as I stood encircled by his arms and looked deep into his eyes, I seemed to see as in a vision the great heart of love that beat for me alone.

CHAPTER IX

SEPTEMBER.

MORE than a month since I confided in my little book — a month of hurry and worry, turmoil and nerve-wracking days.

All the walls of my house have been done over in preparation for our wedding. I have been so glad to allow Donald the privilege of doing this, and how he has enjoyed renewing and feathering the nest. Many new things have been added all over the house; only the library has remained unchanged, except retinted walls and new draperies. How I love beautiful draperies!

Donald requested the pleasure of refurnishing my room throughout and I was only too happy to grant it; and now, the night before the wedding, it is finished, even to the smallest detail and is beautiful beyond description — just such a room as I have dreamed of but never could afford to have. I was consulted on every detail of the furnishing; in fact, Donald knows little of such things. The only stipulation to me was that I should not question the cost. The least intimation of such a tendency, Donald said, would close the door on me and he would

"cover the walls with gold, the ceiling with diamond stars and the floor with sandalwood." Of course, after such a terrible threat I ceased to talk economy and humored my tempestuous lover to his most extravagant bent. The result is a dream—a perfect room!

The room is large with a bow end to the south, with large windows reaching to the floor, and a bed alcove with high windows to the East. The walls and silken draperies are in a warm shade of gray; the ceiling, the daintiest shade of pink; the draperies of the filmiest lace, with here and there a rosebud. The rug has the same shade of gray, with rose colors peeping through, as through a gray mist—a suggestion of color, rather than a reality. Woodwork, bed, table, dressing table, book case, desk, all of ivory white.

My desk is the thing *par excellence*. It is furnished with all the little luxurious things a woman loves, as is also my dressing table—all in silver.

Then my bow-window is filled with ferns in silver-toned jardineres, many of them—I must confess—in silver dishes. I trembled at the extravagance, but dare not say a word.

And the crowning gifts of all are the two pictures which Donald brought today and which he insisted on hanging before I had even a peep at them. They are hung on opposite walls, and are, to me, the most beautiful pictures in the world, engravings, with no touch of color to spoil the harmony. One, Long-

fellow's " Maidenhood "—" Standing with reluctant feet, where the brook and river meet? " The other, the " Sistine Madonna," with all its wonderful tenderness and sweetness. I flew at Donald and gave him such a hug as I am sure he never received before. Could anything else have so revealed the beauty and fineness of his nature?

This beautiful room has been such a bond between us — we have been so happy with our nest building ! I cannot understand how a young couple, just married, trying to adjust themselves to the new life, learning to know each other as they really are — in all those first tender days, can deny themselves the pleasure and unity of thought there is in home building. Our home furnishing is something neither Donald nor I will ever forget.

My personal preparations have not been so pleasant. I have not been able to grow enthusiastic over all the dainty things — although I am very fond of pretty clothes — that I must have — every bride has them ; but they have been such a tax on my strength and spirits. I have felt so hurried, working against time ; have strained every nerve — and just when I wanted to feel at ease and have time for all my friends ; but then, it would not seem like being married without all this rush and these great piles of finery.

Dear Special Friend has constantly remonstrated with me: " Why drop your sensible self, Katheryne," she said, " and be in this vortex of clothes,

millinery and dressmakers? It makes my own head whirl just to think of all you are trying to accomplish. Why begin your new life with tense nerves and weary mind and body? Donald is not marrying you for your clothes, but for yourself — just you, and are you going to hide your real self under wornout nerves? No amount of clothes will make amends for a cheerless companion." I am almost sure she is right, but all my friends have done as I am doing and would think me queer if I did otherwise.

Donald only staid a few moments tonight; he said that I looked so weary and in need of rest. But I could not shut my eyes until I had recorded this last page of my girlhood days. They have been such happy years, so full of the good things of life, the real things, friends — loyal, steadfast friends. I know contentment with the simple things of life, with nature and home duties and books, and I have always looked forward to marriage as the rounding and completing of my life. Will it be?

FOR the last month, in fact, ever since my long talk with Donald before the fire in my library, I have thrown off foreboding and fear and Donald and I have been so happy; but tonight, when bidding me good-bye, he said: "This is our last good-bye, darling; from this time on to eternity, our paths will no longer divide; you will be mine for all time — all the old fear returned and I know that my lips

were unresponsive and cold and that Donald left me with a pang in his heart.

DEAR old garden, lying there so beautiful in the moonlight! I have been so happy with you always. May I never bring to you a tale of sorrow! But, even as I look, the black storm clouds approaching so rapidly from the West engulf the moon; all her brightness disappears, and the garden is in darkness.

CHAPTER X

SEPTEMBER.

MY wedding morning broke bright and clear; the distant hills, with their freshened verdure, glowed in the clear morning atmosphere; the nearby forest tinkled musically, as it shook the raindrops from its smiling leaves—a fresh-washed earth, with no trace of last night's storm in the sky. Only the earth things show the result of the tempest through which they passed, but even the grasses and plants begin to rear their heads and the blossoms to dry their tears in response to the sun's call. All nature is revivified by his warm rays and responds to his magnetic touch in an effort to bring herself back into harmonious lines and order—all but my poor fallen oak at the foot of the garden. There it lies, prostrate, twisted and broken, withering in the sun's hot rays; only the splendid stump standing in all its mutilated gruesomeness, tells the story of the battle of destructive force against useful strength. A fallen tree appeals to me almost as a fallen man—the sudden cessation of life and activity, of aspiration and growth. The downfall of my old oak is like the downfall of a great man, who, as the oak in the old German legend, refused to bend

and so was broken, "sturdy and staunch" it stood, no weakling thing to be swayed by every wind that blew. Even so the strong man of courage and conviction stands, unyielding to the storms of error that beat upon him; and though he breaks and apparently goes down under the terrific strain, so great is the fall that a whole nation is aroused to consider the cause for which he stood so bravely.

The robins preparing for their winter migration, are chattering about the fallen oak, wondering, I am sure, where they will set up housekeeping on their return in the spring.

As I stood pondering my recumbent friend, Sarah came to tell me that breakfast was waiting.

Dear old Sarah with her great, tender heart and uncouth, angular body — the fine intuitions and sensibilities of a woman and the muscular strength of a man. No man has ever been found keen enough to see through the forbidding exterior into the golden heart within, so she goes through life alone, finding her happiness in the joys of others. No one could replace her in my heart or household; she has guarded and served me all my life and loved me as her own. She has tingled to her finger-tips with romance ever since my wedding preparations began — all woman now, her heart swelling with tenderness and joy for my future.

"Happy is the bride that the sun shines on, Katine," she said, as she patted my shoulder. "I prayed for sunshine last night, child, when the

storm was raging, and behold! Did you ever see a brighter wedding day?"

"You dear old saint," I replied, as I squeezed her hand; "your prayer would be answered, if any prayer was."

"Don't doubt, Katine, don't doubt the power of God!" she exclaimed, almost in fear. "Think of the fury of His power last night when it broke the great strong oak! Think, if that fury were turned on us!"

"Oh, Sarah," I said, "those are the very things that make me doubt. Why should a power that we call 'good' destroy anything so glorious, so useful as my oak?"

"I don't know, child," she replied; "it is all hidden from us, but sometimes He sends good and sometimes He sends bad; we must not question. It is God's way."

"A very human way," is my answer; "that is just as man works. All smiles today and revengeful tomorrow, because, perchance, we have sinned against some of His laws, and oftentimes, through ignorance. Yet, we are assured that the punishment will follow. We are told that God created us with all our weaknesses and then He chastises us for not being perfect. A human parent would be much more considerate of his erring children. The 'Prodigal Son,' being received with open arms and rejoicing is a much more convincing illustration of tender, omnipotent love and care than the fury

of last night, lashing the beautiful, growing things into shreds and destroying them, and then the resuscitating sunshine working today to undo the destruction of the storm. Your God seems to me, Sarah, much as the mythological gods of old, and I know I can be a much better woman, my dear, old, hovering angel, by believing in the simple forces of nature than in fearing an ever-changing God."

"Oh, honey, don't talk so," she exclaimed; "it sounds like blasphemy. It makes my old heart tremble to hear a young thing like you, with all your lessons to learn, say such things. Do try to believe, for God's punishments are terrible when they come."

"Don't worry, dear heart," I laugh, as I put my arms about her. "I'll be your own good little girl and then, if He does strike me, I will have the satisfaction of knowing I do not deserve it, which is something, you know."

"Katine, Katine, you must not be so bold. God is a revengeful God. You make me tremble. But how forgetful of me!" she suddenly exclaimed, remembering why she came into the garden—"with Miss Margaret waiting at the breakfast table; and, how can you stand talking about such things on your wedding day?" All the sparkle of excitement returned to her eyes and the rough old hand tenderly smoothed my hair.

I found Dear Special Friend waiting at the breakfast table, happiness radiating from her face. I

greeted her with a kiss. "A perfect day," she said, smiling into my eyes.

"Did you also pray for sunshine?" I laughingly inquired.

"No, dear," she said, "only sunshine of the heart. We do not need the sun to make a perfect wedding day."

"Sarah is trying to make me believe that the sun is shining today because she requested it as a special favor for my wedding; and that last night, God, in His fury, broke down my beautiful oak. I think my friend, Billy, works more consistently than that."

"So he does, Katheryne," she said, "if what you say represents God's work, but it does not. In the first place, we can always have sunshine if our thoughts are right. When we live right our light comes from within. God sends only good to His children. Your beautiful tree was not overthrown by God."

"The storm broke the tree," I replied, indifferently; "it was an act of Nature in one of her wild moods."

"Neither would I credit destruction to Nature, Katheryne," Margaret said. "In the spiritual sense, God and Nature are identical. The storm was the culmination of some form of error that had grown to such proportions that it burst in destructive force. So sin, beginning subtly—a weakling—if unheeded, will, in time, grow to such propor-

tions that it will finally turn to rend and destroy itself ; sometimes in the form of sickness, again in destruction or misfortune. God, good, is never a destroyer, but a builder. Good builds on sure foundations, never for the individual alone, but for the benefit of the masses. The beautiful tree blesses all who come within the radius of its outstretched arms, irrespective of ownership. It is a thing of beauty to rest the eye upon ; it provides a place of refuge and rest for man and beast ; the little children love it, and the bird finds within its sheltering branches a safe hiding place for her young. God could not destroy your oak."

" You are always so generous to your God, Margaret. You guard His reputation as carefully as though He were your best friend. I wonder if He is any relation to Sarah's God who is so easily offended and retaliates by pouring vengeance on the miscreant's head."

" What nonsense you can think of, dear," Margaret replied, smiling ; " but what could one expect of a girl on her wedding day ? Pardon me, for attempting to take you into the depths of metaphysics, from whose realm even ' stern men with empires in their brains ' hold aloof. Only this, dear child," she said, as Donald appeared at the gate, " I wish you and Donald knew my God, who is, as you say, my best friend, the friend who never fails me and who knows my needs before I ask to have them supplied,"— and she left me with a loving pat.

Donald stood in the doorway with a face that seemed to have brought the sunshine indoors. Coming quickly to my side, he took my face between his hands. He looked long and intently into my eyes, holding them with the passionate glow of his own. "Are you happy today, sweetheart?" he asked.

"Yes, Donald."

"And contented?"

"Yes, Donald," again I replied, as a child that has learned its lesson. He turned away half impatiently.

"And you, dear," I asked, catching his arm; "is this a happy day for you, and are you contented?"

He turned to me, his face in a glow of tenderness: "Words fail to express how happy I am, Katheryne. I cannot believe that you are going away with me tonight to be with me forevermore. It seems like a dream of some impossible thing, from which I shall soon awake. 'And contented,' you ask? Why, yes, dear, why should I not be? Will you not be my wife when the clock strikes twelve?"

We walked to the window and stood, hand in hand, looking down into the garden. "Your poor, broken oak," Donald said, regretfully.

"I miss it so," I replied. "It was the background of my garden and it always reminded me of you, dear, so sturdy and strong, and just as unbending," I laughed, glancing shyly at him — a little

chill of fear creeping in as though I were taking liberties with a stranger.

"Am I unbending, Katheryne? I always thought I was the meekest of men. I surely yield to all your demands, dearest."

"That remains to be proven, my self-contained man," I answered. "You will have to open up your thought-world to me more freely than you have done in the past if you wish to convince me of my power over your life. You make me think of something rare and precious bottled and corked securely for fear of losing its fragrance. I grow weary of hearing only about myself, and besides, you are cultivating egoism, a bad asset for a wife, I am told."

"You are the sweetest subject I can think of, sweetheart," he replied; "and to speak true, I have no other thoughts when you are with me. My mind is filled almost to bursting with the aroma of your presence."

"If you tell me that a year from now, Donald, I will believe you. If you bring me to this window and we stand looking down into the garden as we are now, with your arms about me and your face all sparkling with love-glints, and tell me I am the one woman in all the world to you, I will believe all you tell me. But, beware! If there is the slightest change, even in inflection, I will recognize it and know your words today were only a lover's dream."

"I take the challenge gladly, dear heart, and

only wish you would give me some words, as well, to cherish from our wedding day."

"You dear laddie, let me think, what can I say? — First stoop down and let me kiss your dear eyes that are glowing with such beautiful love-light. Now keep them closed while I tell you how sweet your words of love are to me, and — dear, it does fill me with pride to have been chosen as the woman you love and desire for your wife, and truly, there is no man in all the world who is your equal. And, oh, Donald," I continued, from the circle of his arms, "are you not glad that this is to be our home always? Think how lonely all these lovely growing things would be without me, and you may be sure they will soon adopt you as a part of their own particular landscape. I am so grateful to you for letting me have my own way. I think that was when I began to love you, when you consented to share my garden throne. You will soon love it for its own sake and wonder how you could have thought of living elsewhere."

Here Sarah came to announce that it was time to dress. Holding Donald back a moment at the door — "You'll be very kind to her, Mr. Donald," she said, entreatingly.

"Yes, Sarah," he replied, earnestly. "I will cherish her more than life itself, and I trust that you will remind me if I ever fail her."

Dear Special Friend, linking her arm in mine, carried me to my room where she dressed me as

she would dress a child, then led me to a mirror and bade me look. I looked as at someone, not myself. The picture, I must confess, was beautiful and alluring. A thrill of pleasure passed through me that I had beauty to bestow upon Donald.

Strains from the "Rose Maiden" now rang out, filling the air with joyousness, the voices of my friends musically announcing, "This is thy wedding morning." Then Billy came for me and led me down the stairs, drawn by the entralling measures of the Lohengrin March, to the beautiful flower arch in the dear old library, where Donald was waiting for me.

I have little remembrance of the rest—the simple ceremony, only fragments of which penetrated to my confused senses. My hand rested in Donald's; the golden circlet slipped over my finger, with the words "With this ring I thee wed, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow"—"In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, Amen!" Then came the prayer, "Our Father," followed by the solemn injunction, "Those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder"—the pronouncement of "husband and wife"—and the final blessing, "God preserve and keep you." Then Donald's glowing face was bending over me, his warm kiss was on my lips and his voice gently whispered, "my wife;" then friends were clasping both hands, kisses, congratulations and good wishes fell upon us like rain; then all

was confusion, merriment and feasting. The day quickly passed and we were off for the City to a friend's house, and a reception. The faces of friends, of acquaintances, the music, the flowers, the gifts, all seem a jumble of memory.

Then it was time to dress for going away, then train time, and then we were all gathered on the platform. Such a jostling, riotous crowd it was! Showers of rice descended upon us, bunches of roses were hurled at our heads; then a merry scramble for the spoils — for a rose that had touched the bride. We saw our trunks appear, decorated with old shoes, and all the announcements the ingenious mind of man can conceive for the newly-weds — the last tender mercies of our friends. But, somehow, nothing offended or abashed. I was still in that confused, dreamy state of mind, doing as I was told, allowing others to think for me. Then we were on the train, the crowd shouting at the window. Dear Special Friend gave me a cheery hug: "God keep you, dear, and direct your path," she said. Then my face was between Billy's hands: "Dear Little Heartsease, that you and Donald may always be as happy as you are tonight, is my fervent wish," and he kissed my forehead. A hearty handshake to Donald, and they were gone. Our train slid into the night and Donald and I were alone.

CHAPTER XI

OCTOBER.

MORE than two weeks since I left that merry crowd of friends on the home platform to go with Donald into an unknown world, a world which the fancies of youth picture as alluring and beautiful—a world of freedom, not realizing that it is an unexplored country in which pitfalls and dangers lurk, as well as great pleasures. Youth never allows the realities of life to paint themselves upon its fair lens, to darken the bright pictures of hope. Only experience teaches us that as it takes intense heat to merge two metals into one, so it takes years of life together, and fiery furnaces, to merge two beings into one.

When the girl is submerged into the wife, a certain brightness disappears, like a mist, so elusive it can hardly be discerned. And the woman takes on a shadow just as elusive—of wistfulness. Is it wistfulness for the future of the lives for which she may be responsible? Or, if there are no new lives, a wistfulness for the lost motherhood, the closed door of wonderful possibilities—a door too often closed by her own hand, and behind which the richest gifts of life are hidden?

Whenever I approach my little confidante I find myself straying into a philosophic strain, and yet, I started to tell you of our wedding journey — our honeymoon.

Donald and I have had a happy two weeks together. We took a circuitous route to the "City among the Clouds," a seventy-two hour ride to the coast of Southern California, over that trackless waste, where, a short fifty years ago, the traveler, once launched on his weeks of hard travel, had no assurance of reaching his destination; he knew not whether he would fall under the cruel tomahawk of the blood-thirsty Apache, or sink, exhausted and dying of thirst, in the "Valley of Death." Now, so wonderful are the resources of man, that in luxury and comfort the trip is made in a few hours.

We made a flying journey to points of interest through Southern California, only pausing now and again, like "birds of passage," for a few hours of rest and sightseeing; for we were due — or rather, Donald was — so easily and quickly have I fallen into the plural phrase — at an early date in the mountain city. Our honeymoon is combined with business; but we have promised ourselves a winter in the near future in this most charming of countries, where the departing glories of a past civilization pause to look sorrowfully down upon the powers of the present, knowing that they, too, must yield their place to the advancing millions. The ages-old fact that it is pleasant to keep in the back-

ground, is accentuated in this country of many interests — one cannot get away from it — where one finds so strange a mingling of the old and the new.

As we sauntered through the sunny gardens of the old Missions with their air of antiquity and grandeur, presided over by the meek and gentle monks, it was easy to glide into dreams of the past, when these picturesque stone piles were the pivot of power, swaying the Spanish noblemen and the prosperous Indians at will. And, as the dream expands — Ramona, beautiful, self-sacrificing Ramona, appears — now in the beauty and promise of girlhood, domineered over by the stern Senorita; again, the thrall of a mighty love, a happy wife and mother; and then, the seeming victim of fate, her sad wanderings in search of home and quiet begin, reaching over years of loneliness and misery and squalor, with her great love shining as a beacon light through it all, lightening the burdens. We turn from these scenes with tear-filled eyes and look with gladness at the calm happiness of her later years; and awaken at last to realize that we are standing in the well-nigh deserted garden, the affluence, the power, the actors — all are gone! As we turned away, I felt a sense of unreality and sadness stealing over me; the modernity seemed glaring and flaunting against the background of the softened past.

In our northward flight, we crossed the "Painted Deserts," our thoughts reverting to the brave men, the unrewarded heroes, who gave their lives in their

efforts to cross this arid waste, that they might subdue the fertile lands beyond. Where Spaniard and American alike left their bones bleaching in the sun, when they had gone out so gayly, so hopefully, in their search for glittering gold.

Both Donald and I having a love for nature untouched by the hand of progress, and of all things primitive—even primitive man—left the train at the Pueblo village of Leguna, to make a detour into the interior to visit Acoma. We found a wagon waiting to carry passengers across the country, a ride long to be remembered. We rapidly passed across wide stretches of almost level prairie, fascinating to the lover of nature's blending colors, in their rich shades of brown and green and orange, while the distant mountains stood serene and majestic in the morning's amethyst light. When a few hours out, we had our first view of that "noblest single rock in America," the Enchanted Mesa, a pink-tinted pile of perfect symmetry, looming in the distance, rising perpendicular and uniform four hundred and fifty feet above the plain, and continually changing form as one beholds it from different points of view. Upon near approach we found it circular in form, suggesting an old Roman Coliseum, with inaccessible heights. To the people of Acoma it is the "Haunted Mesa." Centuries ago, the legend runs, this formidable pile was occupied by a Pueblo village, the women holding the heights while the men worked the plains below.

One day when all the men were at work, an earthquake shock filled with rock the only available means of ascent or descent, and the women and children of the village were thus left stranded in mid-air; their friends being unable to rescue them, they perished by starvation and the dust of their bones was blown to enrich the plains below.

Soon after leaving this enchanted palace of rock, we came in sight of that strange "City of the sky," the village of Acoma, three hundred and fifty feet above the plain. We ascended a winding path, flanked by frowning cliffs. On reaching the summit, we found lying before us, on what seemed to be "an island of the air," a perfect specimen of the civilization found here by Coronado almost four hundred years ago. It is difficult to describe the feeling one has in looking from that height over the barren plain, then back to the fortress-like buildings, still more barren, perched like an eagle's eyrie on the topmost ledge. It tells of a time of fear and watchfulness, of man at bay, a last hope of life. I grasped Donald's arm and clung close to him. "To think," I exclaimed, "of these people living here generation after generation, carrying up that steep ascent even the dirt in which they bury their dead—a life of privation and drudgery! What had kept them alive? What hope had they?"

"The love and hope of life," Donald replied; "the same that keeps us all alive, only our standards differ."

We entered from the top a number of these cell-like homes, in which were neither stoves nor beds, the sun sufficing for heat and the roof and a blanket for rest and sleep. Little food is required in these warm climates; a little fruit, a little bread and coffee, and hunger is appeased. The floors of these one room houses were bare, and, strange as it may seem, clean.

We found among this primitive people, woman's right of property firmly established. She is complete owner of her apartment, or home, and its contents. As the guide gave us this information, Donald, with a quizzical smile, stooped to look under my hat brim into my eyes. "Surely, Katheryne," he said, "you are a descendant of the Moquas."

"And should her husband ill-treat her," the guide continued, "she has the right to evict him."

"Now, you see, dearie," Donald whispered, "why I objected to going into your house."

"What a wise provision," I returned, "for the protection of woman. A law unto herself, and much more effective, I venture to say, than the divorce law."

"The children also take the mother's name instead of the father's," the guide informed us.

"Surely," Donald exclaimed, "this is the place of ideas for the woman who would dominate man."

We lingered sometime in this wonderful village, which prides itself upon being self-supporting. We were too late to witness the revolting "snake dance,"

which Donald regretted exceedingly, the rehearsal of which was quite enough for me and destroyed my appetite for dinner.

We left Acoma feeling that the curtains of the past had parted, giving us a look backward — centuries back — even to a time preceding the arrival of the first Spaniards.

Our next objective point was the Grand Canyon, that Canyon which one writer describes as "Nature wounded unto death and lying stiff and ghastly, with a gash two hundred miles in length and a mile in depth in her bared breast, from which is flowing fast a stream of life-blood called the Colorado." Words cannot describe the grandeur of that wonderful opening in the earth's surface. As one stands spell-bound, speechless, with that mighty silence brooding over all, gazing down into abysmal depths, or up at gigantic temples peering into the clouds, one questions — did nature, in the beginning of time, in one of her most serious, energetic moods, create these heights and depths as a recruiting ground for her winds, her cyclones, her earthquakes, her everything that is violent? Surely nothing mild could come from such an awe-inspiring source! Or, was this wonder created in a sportive mood when youthful energies must find a vent? Or, to prove to her enemy, water, how helpless he was when enclosed by rocky precipices?

We turned from the majestic scene with heaving bosoms and in silence, my heart throbbing in breath-

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less awe, and with the fervent desire that I might once again stand upon the edge of that stupendous gorge and behold the wonders of earth and sky and air.

CHAPTER XII

OCTOBER.

THEN days ago, weary with rapid traveling, we arrived in America's "Scenic Playground," and ideal place for outdoor life. Nowhere, within the same area, is there so great a variety of wonderful scenery, as in the vicinity of this beautiful mountain city.

I have been much alone here, Donald's time being completely filled with the case in hand. I sat in the courtroom the other day while he was pleading his case and my heart swelled with pride at his masterly way, his intense earnestness, his brilliant oratory.

Donald's client, a boyhood acquaintance, the son of a man who had been a life-long employee of his father, is being tried for wife-murder. He is a ranchman. His wife, so rumor said, was querulous. She disliked the country, made no friends and was very lonely, consequently, nagged her husband and made life a burden for both. One day, when he was in the city, she was found dead on her doorstep. The public, knowing how discordant they were, immediately suspected him of the crime and have woven such a web of circumstantial evidence about him that there seems no possible hope of his

escape. Yet, Donald believes him innocent. He says that no man could have the look and actions and atmosphere that this man has when he tells his story, and be guilty. Yet the man himself has no theory to advance as to how his wife met her death. She was shot through the heart and no gun in sight. The man is disliked by his neighbors and receives little sympathy. A hard case, and seemingly a hopeless one. But Donald will not yield, he is so sure that something will develop to bring the real criminal to justice.

I HAVE enjoyed my wanderings alone about the city and have quite a collection of curios to take home. These have been such perfect days. We feel that we have solved the problem of ennui in the new relation—we have had no time hanging heavily upon our hands; we have each gone our way, parting in the morning to meet at dinner, where the day's story is related; a joyous evening at the theater, in the shops, or sometimes, just aimlessly wandering about the streets, with a lunch, perhaps, at some out of the way place.

I HAD such a happy surprise today. I was strolling leisurely along, enjoying the sunshine and having a good time doing nothing, when suddenly someone called: "Katheryne, Katheryne Forbes!"—and turning, I found myself facing Mary and Jim Martin, two college friends and classmates. They

had married immediately after graduation, three years before, and I had known nothing of them since.

"Katheryne Forbes no longer," I laughed.

"What, a honeymoon among our mountains?" Jim asked.

"Just that," I replied.

"Not alone, surely!" they exclaimed, in chorus.

"Much of the time. Mr. Gore is here on business."

"Gore!" Jim asked, surprised. "Not Donald Gore?"

"Right, as you always are, Jim."

"Allow me to congratulate you, Katheryne," he said. "You have landed a big fish. The press was loud in praise of the brilliant young lawyer connected with the famous Kearns' case last summer, but he has no chance, whatever, of winning. The man is guilty, beyond the shadow of a doubt. Too bad Mr. Gore's talent is not engaged in a better cause."

I felt my face flush with pride at this generous praise of my husband, and replied: "Donald believes absolutely in the man's innocence—he has never questioned it. He is determined to win."

"Oh, yes, I know," Jim laughed. "Quixotic ideas, boyhood friend, and all that. But no use, Katheryne; the man's as guilty as h—. Pardon, me, girls, but I detest the man. Let us drop the subject. I am not responsible for my words when

Tom Kearns is under discussion. What are your plans for the day, Mrs. Gore?"

"She is going home with us, of course," Mary broke in; "and Mr. Gore will come to dinner at six, and Strauss 'Rosen Kavilier' tonight."

This sounded so like the practical, decisive Mary of old, that my heart sang with happy school-day memories. "I am only too happy to place myself in your keeping, my dear Mary," I said, "and I am sure Donald will enjoy the plan."

"Then I will leave you, girls," Jim said. "I know you are wild to get me out of the way so you can talk, just talk and talk." With a smile and uplifted hat, he was gone and we were alone for a long day of reminiscences.

"I think I will take you straightaway home, Katheryne — you say you have seen all the sights of our city — and we will have a quiet day together. There are so many things I want to know. How's Billy?"

"The same as of old," I replied.

"How envious we used to be of you, Katheryne, when you first came to the dear old 'U.' Such boxes of gorgeous roses as came to you every few days, and candy and books! But after Billy's first visit that feeling all vanished — he was so lovely to all your friends. It must have been a comical sight to see him with a dozen or more girls in tow at the theaters, hotels and restaurants — but what a treat for us! It was such fun to drop the boys when Billy

came. Jim says that even yet he can feel the intense desire he had to 'punch that old duffer's head.' "

"He is just the same," I replied. "I can't realize what life would be without Billy—he has assumed guardianship over me for so many years."

Here we arrived at Mary's cottage — a little bungalow nestling among vines and roses, with a superb view of the mountains.

"And all our own," Mary replied, as I expressed my admiration of the charming house and surroundings.

As I removed my wraps, I observed on Mary's table a little book, which I was sure was a fac-simile of the one that regulates Dear Special Friend. Mary caught my glance and her face lighted with a radiant smile. "You, too?" she asked.

"No," I replied, almost curtly. "It means nothing to me; it seems the veriest nonsense, a repetition of words with which I have been familiar all my life, but with different meanings attributed to them. I really cannot see how educated people can be so blind, willing to be hypnotized by this strange belief. I do not care to hear anything about it," — and I really almost wished that I had not met Mary.

"I know," she said, patting my hand — "I know just your position. But pardon me, Katheryne, you are too dear to me to keep quiet on the subject. I feel that I must tell you how it helped me. Such a

short time ago I felt just as you do — in fact, I had this little book with me all the time I was in school. Your uplifted brows ask, ‘where did you keep it?’ In the bottom of my trunk, you may be sure, and it was never opened. It was unpopular in our set, you know; and anyway, it didn’t mean anything to me then.”

“ And Jim,” I asked, “ does he approve of it?”

“ Oh, yes,” she laughed; “ he’s progressing slowly, kicking at every step. All men are mulish, you know, but all husbands, if their wives have really imbibed the spirit of Truth, take the teaching of this little book by induction, at least. They can’t help it, Katheryne; it is so loving, so wise, so practical, so progressive — so everything, dear, that makes life worth the living.”

I gave a skeptical laugh. “ And how did you acquire all this wonderful knowledge, Mary, if I may ask?”

“ Like every one else,” she replied, sweetly — “ when I had a need. You know father and mother have traveled this beautiful road ever since, years ago, dear old Dad was rescued from drunkenness. I can see by your eyes, Katheryne, that you think me hard in my expression. The drink habit was no part of my real father, only evil trying to master him, which was overcome by God — Good — and destroyed, and only the real man remained. Why should I shield so ruthless an enemy? So — well — when Jim and I were married and leaving mother

and all the rest, mother said: 'I have very little advice to give you, my dear child — only this, when discord of any kind arises between you and Jim, don't bring it to me, dear, or any other friend — take it to God. You know the hard road Father and I traveled to find God, but he has been our shield ever since. Life will not always be smooth. Sooner or later, you and Jim will find little barbs of error creeping in between you' — and I thought, 'how little mother knows Jim.' 'Small though they be,' she said, 'it will require all your love and wisdom to meet them. You will find God here, Mary, whatever your problem may be' — and she pressed this little book between my hands and clasped them tight, then kissed my lips and turned me to Jim. Well, need came much more quickly than I ever dreamed it could possibly come, and in no new way, either. It comes to most wives — the money question. You are one of the few exceptions, Katheryne, for you have your own income."

I smiled as I remembered my difficulties in winning Donald to share that income.

"I had always had my own money," she continued — "not much, to be sure, but my very own, to plan and to do with as I pleased — only, I must keep within that amount. After we were married, I never had any money that I could scheme to spend in a dozen ways and yet make it cover so many needs, as women love to do. Jim had a good salary, but it had never occurred to him that a wife might

want a separate bank account. He knew, and he thought I knew, that anything I wanted within our income, I could have willingly. You know how generous he is, always bearing more than his share of the expense in our college merry-making — but this very method of living, with his generous temperament, I could see, with my systematic mind, might lead us into living beyond our income. Any-way, I felt like an irresponsible child to whom money was doled out when asked for, and I often went without things that I really needed rather than ask for the required amount.

“ Thus we drifted along for six months, until I became very unhappy and discontented and at last, carried my troubles to Jim—always a difficult question for husband and wife to discuss. It is almost impossible for a man to assume business relations with his wife. Jim could not see my position in any light I placed it—felt hurt that I should dislike to ask him for money, saying ‘ that as long as he had a penny, half of it was mine.’ We talked and talked without arriving at any understanding, and finally, I was hugged and kissed, a ten dollar bill thrust into my hand, and the question dismissed, Jim feeling that it had been amicably settled. I loved Jim too much to quarrel with him, but I must confess I stamped on that ten dollar bill when I was alone. ‘ Half of it mine, yes, but none of it with which I could plan,’ I said scornfully.

“ So we drifted along another six months, I going

more and more without things I needed, and Jim, with his man's eyes, never seeing my needs. I used to think if I wore a hat five years, Jim wouldn't know the difference. He was planning more and more investments and I was trying to keep up my end of the business with never a cent of money passing through my hands, only as I asked for it. Finally, one day when I was unusually depressed and miserable, trying not to doubt Jim's love and thinking of my own systematic home where father and mother worked together as partners, in money matters as in everything else, suddenly mother's parting words popped into my head, 'When discord of any kind arises between you and Jim, take it to God.'

"It may seem strange to you, Katheryne, but I did not doubt for an instant that the truth which I could glean from that little book would solve my problem, if I sought diligently—I had seen it solve mother's problems—it would solve mine. I did not pause a moment. My little book that had before remained unopened, became my constant counsellor. I tried to see the perfect man in Jim, but only the faulty man appeared, who treated his wife like a child and kept her out of his business life, giving her kisses in lieu of an allowance. And so, for a long time, I made little progress, but I had had a taste of this wonderful wisdom and knew, if I had patience, that right would prevail.

"And so, it gradually came about that Jim would discuss money matters with me as though I really

knew things and as though I really might be a counsellor as well as wife; and here, just last month, the dear fellow yielded, like the good comrade that he is, and asked me how much I wanted a month to remain his housekeeper, and was very much surprised at my modest request: 'Well, well, Mary, all this fuss for that small amount! Why didn't you tell me long ago?' But I kept silent, looked at him with maternal eyes and gave him a choking hug.

"These great boys, Katheryne, entrusted to our care, we don't realize what a responsibility we have, for a man is very much what his wife makes him. But I fear I have tired you with my long story and have forgotten, entirely, the wonderful surprise I have in store for you," and she rushed away like a small whirlwind.

I had heard a peculiar noise from behind the closed door: "Mary has overcome her dislike for cats, probably," I said to myself, sarcastically, "with her new-fangled ideas—has decided to let an Angora fill the place a baby should and give her more time for reading. Oh, that book, someway, with its inoffensive look, gets on my nerves! It seems to be taking possession of all my friends."

Here the door opened and Mary appeared, looking like a Madonna, with the softest, pinkest, roly-poliest baby in her arms I had ever beheld. I shrieked with joy and surprise and rushed at her, clasping them both tightly in my arms, but instead of crying with fright, that precious baby opened his toothless mouth

and gave Jim's own glad smile. I went down on my knees in rapture before that cherub, not because he was Mary's baby and a beautiful child, but just because he was a baby.

What a joyous day we had with him. He was not a theoretical baby, so I could cuddle and rock and sing to him to my heart's content, even kiss his dimpled arms and hands and neck. So Donald found me when he came in the evening.

"You never looked so beautiful, Katheryne, as with that sleeping child in your arms," he whispered, as he stooped to kiss me.

Donald and Jim found much in common and became friends at once, although I could see that Donald was depressed and restless. Tomorrow was the last day of the trial, and still no evidence to prove the innocence of his client—to the world he remained guilty—convicted, as far as "public opinion" could go, of wife murder.

The evening was soon passed. After the theater we said goodnight to our new-old friends, with a promise to return on the morrow, as Mary and I were to spend a part of the day in the court room.

As we entered our hotel we were approached by a nervous, keen-eyed man, thin almost to emaciation, and visibly trembling with some emotion: "Are you Kearns' lawyer?" he asked, bluntly.

"I am," Donald replied, and I felt the tremor that stirred him.

"I want to see you alone," the man said, with a quick, nervous voice, and a side glance at me.

"Come with us to our apartments," and Donald led the way up the stairs. As I started to leave the room, on our arrival, the man motioned for me to remain.

"Your wife?" he questioned of Donald, who nodded assent. "All the world will know my story tomorrow," he said; "it will do no harm for you to hear it tonight, and perhaps your woman's heart will understand my position more clearly than your husband. It is but a simple story, after all, nothing to shock or revolt you."

Then, turning abruptly to Donald: "You believe your client innocent, Mr. Gore?" he questioned.

"I do," Donald replied. "I have never for a moment considered him guilty. I believe him innocent in the face of the fact that not the slightest clue has been found of the real criminal; yet, I almost despair of proving it. Not even a suspicion of any other has arisen. Kearns, himself can give no suggestion on the subject. If there had been a weapon near we might prove a case of suicide, but we have found no clue whatever." Something in the man aroused Donald to talk freely.

Leaning forward, his breath coming in gasps, his eyes burning with feverish suffering: "I have brought you the solution," the man said, with trembling voice, "and I trust you will be my friend, for

though I confess myself guilty of the death of this woman, I am as innocent as your client."

We sat in silence while he mastered his emotion, the breath of each coming quick and audible. My heart went out in compassion to him. I felt the truth of his words; I longed to help him. At last, he was able to proceed.

"I will make my story as short as possible; it is too painful to dwell upon. My home is many miles from here in a distant state—it matters not where. I came into these mountains to hunt last summer, and one day—this fatal day—the trail led across Kearns' ranch. I stopped at the well—which was unusually near the house—for a drink. The woman came to the door to speak to me and remained standing on the doorstep. I had the impression of a lonely woman, glad of an opportunity to talk. I leaned my loaded gun against the house while drinking, and afterwards stood chatting a moment with the woman. I started to pick up my gun, when, in some mysterious way, the trigger caught and discharged the load. The woman was in range; the bullet went through her heart; she was dead when I reached her. Insane fear and horror took possession of me. I stumbled headlong, blindly, furiously back to the city, and immediately left for my home, where I have lived with the horror of that woman's face ever before my eyes, and always the haunting fear that someone might have been a witness of that fatal accident, and trace me down.

"The thought of some one else being held responsible for the woman's death had never occurred to me. I was so obsessed by my own suffering and fear, until, only last week—by one of those strange coincidences, surely not accidental—I learned of Kearns being tried for the murder of his wife. It seemed a relief to do something. I was a coward no longer, but hurried here at once. It has been a year of hell! I cannot tell you what it means, what a relief it is, to share this terrible secret with another;" he buried his face in his hands and sobbed aloud.

"A strange disclosure," Donald said. "Truly, facts are stranger than fiction."

"I will go now," the man murmured, rising. "Think over my situation and, for God's sake, do what you can for me! You will find me here in the morning."

Donald laid his hand kindly on the man's shoulder. "I believe you are telling me the truth, man. Though a strange story, it is possible. I will do all in my power to have justice done." He grasped Donald's hand in both his own, too full of emotion to speak, and staggered from the room.

"Life is a tragedy, Katheryne," Donald said. "Why should Fate pay this poor fellow so scurvy a trick? He has but one chance in a thousand. If he can but touch the sympathetic cord in the heart of that jury, all will be well with him; if not, the devil will be to pay. Kearns is so universally dis-

liked, they will be loth to let him go. Only this man's unproven story between him and the noose—and if the law will relinquish its clutch upon Kearns, what will be the fate of this brave fellow? Only his power to carry the truth of his story to the hearts of those jurymen will save him."

CHAPTER XIII

OCTOBER.

ALL night Donald tossed restlessly about, impelled by the agitation of his thoughts, rising and pacing rapidly up and down the room. Neither did I sleep until near morning; nor did I question nor speak, hoping that in the silence of the night, just the right thoughts and words might come to him to help liberate this victim of ruthless fate. I ceased to long for success only that Donald might win a famous case, as had been my attitude up to this time, and thought only of that poor, worn face, the trembling hands, the burning eyes and heart-rending sobs. A man's tears are a mark of such utter helplessness, coming only when he feels alone, abandoned, utterly shorn of his strength. And as I reflected on these two men, both innocent and yet so helpless, the law seemed a Juggernaut car, striking down all who crossed its path. Once in the grip of the law, it never again quite relinquishes its hold. If the lash of justice once descends, society is prone to wield it until the wound is beyond healing.

I seemed to have but closed my eyes when I

became conscious that Donald was standing, dressed, beside me. In the early morning light his face looked wan and haggard from the long night's wrestling, but his eyes shone with hope and decisive purpose.

"I will meet you in the dining room for breakfast, Katheryne," he said abstractedly, and hurried away.

I dressed quickly, and on going down, found him and the strange man in earnest conversation. We went into breakfast together—a mere farce, however, little food being eaten. The stranger, I observed, ate nothing. I remonstrated with him because of this, but he waved it aside, saying: "Food would choke me; my mind is too full of misery to leave room for hunger."

He remained but a few moments at the table, going into the outer hall, where we found him later, striding restlessly back and forth like an animal in captivity; if he paused for a moment, his hands twitched, his foot tapped the floor, his eyes shifted from one point to another—his restless spirit gave him no peace.

After dinner, I went to the court room with them, where Mary and Jim joined us. We found the room crowded and overflowing into the hall, an ever moving crowd, pushing, jostling, for the point of vantage—humanity expressing its interest in a fellow-man. Donald secured places for us near the front, and as we were seated, I heard him say to

the stranger, in a low tone: "Remain here until you are called."

We sat restless, longing, yet fearing to have the opening preliminaries over. At last, the counsel for the defense was called. Donald rose, bowed to the Judge and in clear, terse, short sentences, frequently interrupted by the Judge, outlined the case. "Gentlemen," he said, in conclusion, "we have but one fact in this case, and that is that the prisoner's wife met her death by a bullet passing through her heart. No one saw the deed; the woman was alone; no gun was found; and yet, without any evidence whatever, because the law demands a victim, you say the prisoner is guilty. Gentlemen, the man whom the public has condemned, and would destroy on circumstantial evidence, is innocent."

An indrawn breath was heard throughout the room, a shifting of position, as though to ease cramped muscles: "The guilty man, yet innocent, will speak to you; you shall hear the story from the lips of my witness."

Here the trembling, pain-racked man at my side was summoned to the front. With an effort, as though his shaking limbs refused to bear their burden, he arose, and with downcast head, slowly wended his way through the crowd. Every eye was focused upon him. A deathlike stillness reigned about that sea of faces, so intensely quiet that but one man seemed to live, and that, the stranger, slowly making his way through the path opened to

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him by the waiting mass. As he entered the witness stand and stood drooping and nerveless, the crowd wakened to life again, but only for an instant—that leaning forward, listening attitude was resumed as the stranger was sworn in and Donald began questioning him.

All the pitiful tale was drawn out—an age, it seemed to us, sitting in that tense atmosphere. Slowly the words came from the man's quivering lips. He was making a visible, supreme effort to control his emotion, but without success. His voice grew in excitement, as Donald drew out the tragedy that had darkened his life, until it was almost a shriek, then weakened again as he told of his flight from the city, and of his rushing back to save a man from the gallows. But no amount of questioning nor cross-questioning could confuse or change his story and he was finally allowed to retire from the stand; but as he turned to go, he swayed, caught himself, swayed again, and fell in a dead faint. Pent-up feelings now had full sway. They could no longer be controlled, and for a time pandemonium reigned. Hate and excitement had too long held them in thrall; it must have expression; but, finally, order was restored, the stranger was tenderly lifted and carried from the room. The jury stirred uneasily, surreptitiously touched their eyes and looked from one to the other questioningly, then turned to the counsel for the state, who had arisen with a contemptuous smile about his lips.

Addressing the Judge and jury, he began with a sarcastic tirade against what he termed Donald's "sentimental appeal to the jury," referred to the defense as "too thin to merit consideration, a tale from Arabian Nights, a play upon the Brotherhood of Man, which," he thundered forth, "could not be considered. The law must be obeyed; nothing but the law must be taken into account." He referred to Donald as a youth, who, in time, "would cut his eye-teeth." "I compliment him, I think it highly ingenuous of him to bring in this witness at the eleventh hour, but—the law must take its course." He continued: "My friend has said much to you—and eloquently, I confess—in defense of the prisoner, but this Munchausen tale of a stranger cannot be considered, gentlemen." He spoke cynically of "grasping at straws—following a 'will-o'-the-wisp,'" and concluded by saying: "Truly, gentlemen, this is so preposterous a trickery foisted upon us, that I will not weary you with further argument. I know you will attach no importance to such pleading. In short, gentlemen, I trust you to do your duty. I regard you as bound to record a verdict of guilty."

I searched the faces in that jury box as he sat down, to read the impression of that caustic speech, but could learn nothing.

Then Donald was speaking again, making his final plea to the jury. His face was very grave and white. Earnest purpose marked his every movement—he was making one last supreme effort to

save a man's life. For an hour he talked, holding that crowded court room as under a spell. Words poured from his lips like molten lava, burning, seething, convincing words! He rehearsed the few facts known of the case; told of Kearns' boyhood, his honesty, his truthfulness, his tenderness for all animal life and helpless things; related incidents of their boyhood together, in which Kearns had always been the loyal, unselfish friend. He dwelt at length on the hatred of neighbors for his client, a hatred without foundation, which had grown from a land transaction in which Kearns had been favored instead of themselves—the hatred of maliciousness and envy, which had been fed and nurtured until it had extended to those who did not know him, even; and how these enemies had woven such a net about him, inciting the public to fury and desire for revenge, until only an angel from heaven could liberate him.

“And, gentlemen,” he said, pausing—and in that breathless silence I could hear the heartbeats of those about me—“the angel has arrived, or at least, he seems an emissary from God. You have heard from his own lips how the wife of my client met her death.

“Gentlemen, like all things human, ‘the legal profession has its dark as well as its bright side; has in it germs of decay and rotten foulness, as well as of health and beauty,’ and, gentlemen, no side is so dark, no germ so foul, no condition so rotten with

disease as the condition that allows a man to be convicted on circumstantial evidence. Emerson tells us, 'Good men cannot observe the law too closely; and, gentlemen, men like the prisoner are destroyed daily under our law, because Justice cries for an object on which to wreak her vengeance.'

"Gentlemen," Donald concluded, in a low, intense voice, "you saw the agitated man before you; you looked upon his despairing face, his broken body; you listened to his story. He is, by his own confession, guilty! Men, 'Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.' And now, gentlemen of the jury, I beg of you not to return a verdict that will deprive an innocent man of life and liberty, but as you hope for justice at the Tribunal of God, make your decisions."

As Donald sat down, the excitement of the crowd rose to fever-heat, suffocating from its repression. It swayed and moved as though seeking expression. A sob broke from some over-wrought woman, adding to the super-charged atmosphere of the room. Soon, however, breathless stillness reigned again. The State's Attorney arose, tipping himself forward on his toes as though wishing to present an imposing figure, and presented in a short, acrimonious speech, his final argument to the jury. Then came the Judge's charge. The jury retired and we sat in impatient silence, awaiting the return of that unchangeable verdict. They were gone but twenty minutes. Every breath was suspended as the

spokesman arose to deliver the verdict. "Not guilty!" rang out over that anxious crowd. A pause, as though an effort to believe their ears—then they breathed and moved and lived again; some condemning, some rejoicing, all questioning what the verdict would mean to the strange man.

The stranger recovered from his faint after long hours of careful nursing. When he fully realized that his sacrifice had not been in vain, that the public had exonerated the prisoner from crime, it affected him like an elixir of life. Fear for himself seemed to have vanished. The State accepted the story as he had given it, and he was liberated. He disappeared from our life as suddenly as he had come into it.

Kearns was full of gratitude to Donald for his liberty and told us that he would leave that part of the country as soon as he could dispose of his property; said there could be no happiness in a place so filled with sad memories.

We were both eager to return home, but at the earnest solicitation of Mary and Jim, decided to spend one day in the "Garden of the Gods," as Donald had been too much occupied to make any excursions into the mountains.

A wonderful day it was! Filled with pictures of Nature's handiwork! Giving us another wonderful picture to hang in memory's gallery, and a pleasant ending to a honeymoon, filled with varied experiences.

CHAPTER XIV

OCTOBER.

WE arrived home last evening — just a month from the day of our wedding. I was so thrilled with joy and anticipation at the thought of being in my own dear home again that our train seemed to take a snail's pace, the wheels murmuring just such nonsensical thing to my ears as the creatures in "Wonderland" did to Alice: "Put on the brakes, Katheryne, put on the brakes," they kept muttering — "Don't hurry us so, steady there, steady now," and my nerves grew quite unruly with my thoughts traveling so much faster than the wheels. And when, at last, our train did deposit us in our "ain Countrie," Mike's full-moon face, wreathed in its gilt-edged, stubby beard, was the first to meet our eyes. We had given orders that no one was to know of our coming, so our arrival was made in quietness and peace.

"Sure, and it's the glad b'y I am, to see ye're bonnie face again, Miss Katheryne," Mike said, as he took my hand and reached for the luggage carried by Donald. "Jack's been pinin' and like to die, ye're gone so long. And O'll be glad, indade, Mr.

Gore, to share the honors of Rosedale with anither mon." Oh, how good that caressing brogue sounded.

Arriving at Rosedale, Jack's quick ear and keen scent told him his mistress was near almost before we entered the gates—and such ecstatic barks! Such leaping and apologizing! I was almost overwhelmed by his violent embrace, and for once in his life he forgot his manners and my likes and dislikes, and touched my face again and again with his broad, red tongue.

And there was Sarah, with her comfortable figure almost filling the doorway, extending welcoming arms into which I rushed. "My dear, dear Sarah," I cried, "I never was so glad to get back to you!"

"Nor I to have you back, child," she replied; "the days have been long, indeed, since you went away. And, Mr. Donald, welcome you are," she said, clasping his hand in both her own.

Even Topsy, with languid grace and an air of condescension, advanced to meet us, arching her back against my gown, careful, as usual, to rub her satin coat the right way. No loss of dignity here in greeting her mistress! But she received the hug she sought, much to Jack's disgust, his eyes seeming to say: "How can you waste affection on such a cold, heartless creature?"

Sarah had one of her dainty lunches prepared for us—just the things each of us liked best.

“Doesn’t it seem just like coming home to you, Donald?” I asked, as I looked at him with beaming eyes across our very own table—Sarah had been so careful to include him in all the preparations.

“It truly does, Kathryne,” he replied, smiling at me with love-lit eyes, “so long as you do not put into practice the new ideas you gained from the Moqua women.”

“Such evictions only come to unruly husbands,” I answered, “so beware.”

The two old faces were smiling indulgently at us—they were happy in our happiness. I knew they had long been eager for my marriage, thinking I was too much alone, and had they been given the privilege of choosing my husband, Donald would have been the man. We talked late into the night, giving our faithful “hewers of wood” a detailed account of our travels.

Mike, as well as Sarah, had been a part of my life always; he came to my parents a raw lad, direct from the “ould sod” and had never cared to change his quarters since. I often wondered why Mike had never paid court to Sarah, but she had never shown a feminine side to him. “I’m like one of the b’ys,” he said of her once, and his eyes twinkled as he looked after her broad back disappearing in the kitchen door: “A pace of her moind, she’s been given’ me,” he said laconically, and he continued his digging undisturbed.

As DONALD and I ascended the stairs for the night, Jack followed questioningly behind. It had been a custom of long standing that on my return from an absence of any length, Jack was permitted that one night to sleep in front of my bed. He never forgot this and never expected it at any other time. It was an understood thing that, on the day of my expected arrival, Mike gave him a perfumed bath in readiness for the favor. Whether it was the perfume or the wonderful dog mind, I have never fully decided; but for that one night he never questioned. But tonight, it was different; he did not understand Donald's presence, and I had forgotten my dog friend in the joy of my new life. As we ascended the stairs his foot-falls attracted my attention, I turned to meet his inquiring eyes, understanding his position at once. "It's all right, old fellow!" I exclaimed, patting his head. He hesitated no longer, but bounded ahead of us as we opened the door of our room and ensconced himself on the luxurious white bear rug, keeping his watchful eyes fixed upon Donald.

We paused at the door of my dream room to admire its beauty. I held Donald back as he started to cross the threshold: "Wait a moment," I said; "I want a mental picture of this room just as it looks tonight, in all its freshness; it will never seem so perfect again. Familiar things, however beautiful, cease to charm us. I want to stand here in the doorway, with your arms about me, while I

drink in its beauty and remember how good you are to me — and, too, I have something to tell you, my husband."

Donald looked down on me indulgently, as I rested my head on his breast. I so often felt that he did not understand my method of getting at things, which made it hard to explain my thoughts at times.

"A sweet secret, I'm sure," he said; "you always hide your face when you have something especially nice to tell me. I'm all impatience to hear Katheryne — go on, sweetheart."

"This lovely room means so much to me, Donald; beautiful surroundings appeal to me strongly and it was so dear of you to provide all this luxury, that I have not occupied the room since you began beautifying it for me — I kept it until it should be *our* room, instead of mine."

"You darling!" he exclaimed, gathering me closer in his arms; "I knew when I could not get one glimpse into your eyes, that the secret would be sweet to me. Is it any wonder that you hold me with clamps of steel, dearest? You have possession of the secret chamber of my heart — you fill it almost to bursting and will hold it forever and ever. This room will be doubly dear to me, Katheryne, for your sweet thought. Come, love!" And we passed into the misty gray room together.

CHAPTER XV

OCTOBER.

DONALD and I were up with the sun this morning, each eager to take up the suspended duties. We found the garden rather a forlorn place, with a sort of "frayed at the edges" appearance — a bed of geraniums and late asters were the only flowers left, looking rather disconsolate and out of place in their frost-pinched surroundings. Mike had prolonged their lives by carefully tucking them into their blankets at night. My rose arbor looked bare and deserted, not even one last rose remained to suggest the rich beauty of summer. The fish had been removed to the indoor aquariums, and where my brave old oak had stood looked bare and desolate. I could not grow accustomed to the vacant place which its far-reaching branches had filled. With his love of orderliness, Mike had removed every trace of the tree but the high-standing stump. We planned, as we stood reviewing the landscape, to have it covered with vines another season, and to plant a number of quick-growing silver poplars to break the bare outlook.

I started for the barn to visit the twin calves which Mike had reported and my meek-eyed Jersey, but

Donald advised going another direction ; he was very eager to visit the chicken yards — I never before knew he was interested in hens ; I dislike them myself, except when they appear served crispy brown on a China platter, or in fresh-laid eggs in early spring ; but here was Donald, developing a real farmer-like attitude toward the chicken pens. Very strange, I thought. They were Sarah's special charge — "had she sought his admiration for her pets?" I wondered. Soon after, we returned to the house to unpack our trunks and arrange our new possessions. Then Donald left me for a time and when he returned I could feel the excitement in his voice and his boyish attitude told me that he was guilty of some concealment ; he asked me to come with him that he had something to show me ; finally, impatient of my continuing the work in hand, he grabbed me up and ran headlong down the stairs and out the front door, where he set me down silently, leaving me to discover the secret. There a sight met my eyes that almost took my breath away and explained Donald's sudden interest in poultry. On the drive, held by a half-grown lad, were two beautiful saddle horses — one, I recognized as Diana, a horse Donald had ridden for some time.

"Your wedding gift," Donald said, pointing to the other, and beaming at me, as I stood with clasped hands, gazing at the unexpected sight.

"Oh, you extravagant boy!" I exclaimed.

"Well, you would not allow me to provide you

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with a home. I must spend my money some way for you," he replied.

"Oh, I'm so delighted with him; and won't it be great to ride together whenever we wish?"

"Nothing better, Katheryne. Run and get into riding toggery and we will try him. We will ride over to Dear Special Friend's and announce our arrival home."

I sped up the stairs as though pursued by demons, running into Sarah in the hallway, almost taking her off her feet. "What is it?" she cried in alarm; "anything wrong?"

"You knew the surprise awaiting me, you old fraud!" I said, with a fond shake. "Come and help me into my habit; Donald is waiting for me to try that beautiful new horse"—and I rushed on to my room, where I was quickly attired in riding habit and off to join Donald.

We had ridden together often, but I had never thought I could afford a horse of my own—"What a glorious gift!" I thought.

When I came down, Donald was taking a last look at the saddles. "This is Pete," he said, as I joined him; "he is to be Mike's assistant." The boy holding the horses, acknowledged the introduction with a bashful nod. I gave Donald a look of apprehension. I had lived so carefully on my little income that all these extensions seemed like wildest extravagance to me.

"Here, Katheryne, don't look so alarmed," Donald said, as he took my hand to assist me to mount; "you must remember, you have a husband now. And you can't ride with your nerves running riot like this; you are trembling with excitement; get hold of yourself. This is a spirited fellow, and you will need your head as well as your hands to manage him."

I stood caressing my horse's glossy coat, while he explored my neck with his velvety muzzle. Soon my nerves steadied — then we were off, down the drive and through the gates and away for a five-mile canter.

"Oh, you beauty," I said, as we turned our horses homeward and came at a slower gait; "what shall I call you? He travels so swiftly and easily, Donald, as though he had wings on his heels — what do you think of Mercury for a name?"

"Just the thing to go with my Diana."

"Nothing you could have given me, Donald, would have afforded me half the pleasure as this horse. You seem to read my every thought."

"Love is a great revealer, dear," was his reply. "Billy was commissioned to make the purchase while we were away, and he's surely found a fine animal. I knew his knowledge of horse-flesh could be trusted."

With tingling cheeks from the frost-laden air, we reached Dear Special Friend's gate and were greeted with exclamations of surprise and joy: "You come,

mounted on your steeds, like a god and goddess from the clouds," laughed Margaret.

"So we are, or at least, our mounts are a god and goddess," I replied. "Meet Mercury, my dear friend," I said, patting my horse's shining mane. "Bow your head, Mercury, bow to the lady. And this is Diana, you know. Oh, you need not smile so wisely — you were in the conspiracy; and you, too, Billy, boy," I cried, as he appeared hurrying down the street; "but I am so happy over results that I forgive you all. Come and help me down, Billy. We are going to stay to lunch, Margaret."

Billy lifted me down, at the same time giving me a resounding kiss full on the lips — I could see Donald wince — and placed me in the arms of my precious friend.

"Of course, you are going to stay to lunch," she said; "Billy was coming anyway."

I raised my eyebrows: "You seem to have taken Billy under your wing in my absence," I murmured, and saw a rosy tinge creep into her cheeks. Did my eyes deceive me? What had happened while I was away? I stood looking from one to the other. Would wonders never cease? — Margaret, blushing like a school girl, and Billy ill at ease!

"What else would you expect!" Billy exclaimed, not looking at me and appearing interested in the fit of my saddle. "You threw me over for Donald. Did you expect me to go wandering about homeless

for a whole month, with the latch-string of Miss Margaret's cozy cottage so near at hand?"

I did not answer and as we entered the house, I felt just a little piqued. I had thought of these two friends as being so wholly mine that I could not adopt so sudden a change. What had taken place between these two in the month I had been gone? I had never dreamed of any attraction between them, other than friendship, and I don't believe there had been, they had always met, with me as a central point, in my house or garden.

"Oh, I know," I thought, "it's that abominable philosophy of Margaret's; I knew Billy was succumbing to it. For a whole month, they have been thrown together and have studied and talked that one thing alone, with the result, no doubt, that they have discovered they have much in common, and both are lonely. Well—and why not? I questioned of myself as I threw off my selfish thoughts. Only, the possibility of such an attraction had never occurred to me before; I had always considered them mine exclusively; I could not easily adjust myself to the new condition—but, could anything be better? And I came out of my abstraction and beamed upon them like a veritable grandmother all through lunch, which, I could see, both resented. And when we had left the table, after learning all the news of the month, and telling them of "our month" I held Billy by both arms and looked into his eyes impishly, without saying a word. Slowly

the color came into his cheeks and he looked really confused.

"Well, what foolish notion have you taken into your silly little head now?" he asked, shaking me. I only laughed and looked over at Dear Special Friend, which sent the crimson flood into his face again. And when Donald said we must go, as he had to be in the city that afternoon, I replied that I would remain with Aunt Margaret for the rest of the day. I was so obessed by what I thought I had discovered that I fear I was very rude and ready to play the part of a ferret, but for once, Dear Special Friend did not echo my wish, and Donald settled the question by saying I did not know Mercury well enough to ride home alone. So we left them standing at the gate together and I could but think, as I tossed them a backward kiss, "What a perfectly lovely combination!" and said as much to Donald.

"Don't you think you are a little premature in your conclusions, Katheryne?" he inquired, brusquely. "And don't you think you are a little childish in your actions with Billy? If you were twelve instead of being a woman, it would be different. I do not approve of your treating Billy as though he were your father. He isn't your father and he is a very attractive man, not fifteen years my senior," he looked at me with a little frown.

A hot retort rose to my lips; I wanted to remind him of his promise, but I mastered it and we rode on in silence, a little chill creeping over me. I had

lived too much alone to endure criticism amiably, and to question my attitude toward Billy was preposterous.

Donald tried to look into my eyes when he helped me to dismount, but I would not allow it, for I knew they were full of tears. I rushed into the house and away where I knew he could not find me and cried my hurt away, and when I came down, ready to be friends, Donald had gone.

CHAPTER XVI

DECEMBER.

CHIRSTMAS EVE. For a long time I have sat in my bay-window overlooking the street, waiting for Donald.

I have been watching a flock of sparrows at their bedtime frolics, joyously circling about each other, seemingly engaged in some mystic game; now high, now low, they fly; suspending themselves in mid air, as though held by an invisible thread; then, skimming just above the surface as though searching for food among the falling snow flakes; again, pausing upon a nearby wire, chatting—I imagined—over their Christmas plans; then, cautiously approaching the little bags of grain and sweets Mike had fastened in the evergreens, with a Christmas greeting “to all the birds.” After satisfying themselves, with their bright, inquisitive eyes, that it was no trap, they ate greedily and finally flew away to an icy bedroom under the eaves where, tucked in their warm feather robes, they are secure.

Darkness came early with the falling snow, gently approaching, as night slowly drew together her purple curtains, enfolding all nature, charitably casting her mantle of shadows about the inharmonies of earth leaving but the softened outline.

The snow is coming down so softly, so noiselessly — Nature in one of her gentlest moods — “like a flock of merry children on tiptoe, finger to the lips, playing a game of blind-man’s buff,” I thought. As I watched the snow flakes fly hither and thither, advance and recede in the gentle breeze, and then quietly, mischievously, settle down to earth, I could imagine each little flake, with twinkling eyes, watching the scurrying breeze searching for him.

DONALD is late tonight and my heart longs for companionship. This loneliness often takes possession of me since my marriage, even when Donald is with me — for, already I have learned to keep many of my thoughts to myself — my fancies, my dreams; and when I cannot talk of these, I seem but a hollow shell, giving forth but a faint tinkle of response. We soon exhaust the few facts we have in common, then silence reigns. It is a great sorrow to me that my joyousness, my buoyancy, my optimism — the very best part of me — does not interest Donald — rather annoys him, I fear, he is so practical, so matter-of-fact, he must see things to believe them. And when, in thought, we walk together, I am away beyond him in the path, seeing only the goal, while he must feel each step. If I try to keep pace with him, try to work out the detail of a subject, as he works — on the basis of reason only — there is friction and misunderstanding. We cannot discern the road by which the other

travels to conclusions ; it is hidden from view, a mist hangs between ; so I have learned to keep quiet and think out my own thoughts. And tonight they dwell on a happy event that takes place in my library tomorrow — Billy and Margaret, the dear friends who seem to be the backbone of my life, are to be married. We talk of the impetuosity of youth! Could there be anything more impetuous than this hurried marriage of my middle-aged friends?

It all happened the day Donald and I lunched with Aunt Margaret. They give me credit for bringing them together ; they say they never thought of marriage until I came that day, so saturated with romance that I cast a glamour over everything, even to the extent of seeing a budding romance in themselves. They had both been so buried in the past — or rather, felt their youth was buried, and had been so interested in my life and plans, that the thought of belonging to each other had never occurred to them.

After Donald and I had gone, they were very lonely and naturally, spent much time together, finding they had many tastes in common. Billy, for sometime, had been studying Margaret's philosophy, had become convinced that as Lord Bacon said: "No pleasure is comparable to standing on the vantage ground of truth ;" and Margaret's explanation of truth had grown to a feasibility with Billy. Dear Special Friend became the teacher,

leading him, as she believes, into paths of right-living — and Cupid took advantage of the occasion.

Well, anyway, it was a happy month for both, and that day we left them standing at the gate and rode away, they turned to each other with amusement at my attitude and actions. As their eyes met, they laughed, unconsciously both extended their hands. "Why not?" Billy said — and the deed was done; and now, just two months from that time, they are to be married, and I am so happy. There is such incompleteness in a life lived alone. A man without an Eve is like a ship without a mariner; and there is little pleasure in a house without a "gude mon" there.

DONALD came at last, laden with packages and looking like Santa Claus, with the snow clinging to his fur coat. I hastened to admit him, standing on tiptoe to kiss him over his bundles.

"Why all this darkness, Sweetheart?" he inquired.

"Stage effect," I murmured, mysteriously. "I wanted the beauty of the house, in its holiday attire, to burst upon you suddenly. Stand just where you are while I turn on the lights," I commanded. — "There" — and I almost held my breath to hear what he would say.

"Wonderful, Katheryne!" he said. "What a magician you are, when you give your fancies reign! How did you manage it?"

"Co-operation," I replied. "Sarah, Mike and myself are the artists." All day we had worked, decorating and arranging the house for the Christmas festivities, and the result was like fairyland.

"All we need to make a perfect Christmas picture, Katheryne," Donald said, when, divested of packages and his great coat, he settled down to his paper for the few minutes before dinner, "is a group of merry children running in and out and up and down the stairs."

A thrill of joy swept over me and I tingled to my finger-tips. I wanted to say, "Perhaps, dear, perhaps—" but he was completely absorbed in that old paper. How I hated it! If only when he had just a few moments he would give them wholly to me and tell me of the happenings of the day, and of how restful it was to get home, and how good to see me again! I am always ready with responses of the same kind if he gives me an opportunity to express them, I watch eagerly for his coming each day. But it's always the same: the evening papers are of more consequence than I, or anything else in the world. I think they were made for the perturbation of wives! I, too, feel eager to know what the world is doing, but that takes second place with our own happenings. I want to hear about Donald's day, and tell him about mine; but that paper is an effectual screen to any confidence. I sometimes wonder if all husbands are just like Donald, so absorbed in outside things, taking for granted

that all the desires of a wife are gratified when she has a home, a husband, plenty to eat and plenty to wear. Oh, well, marriage is quite an educator! I am getting to feel quite grown up.

"There's the dinner gong, Donald," I said, tossing a pillow at him. He arose slowly, eager for a last look into that detestable sheet, never glancing at me, only nodding his head—he hasn't a bit of fun in him. We dined quite in silence, Donald so absorbed in some thought, he was not conscious of his surroundings. He finally emerged from his abstraction at the completion of dinner, to say: "I forgot to tell you, Katheryne, that Mrs. Lathrop wants us to remain with them after the dance tonight."

"We could hardly do that with our plans for tomorrow," I answered, "and I do not mind the ride out—rather enjoy it, in fact; and it's high time for us to dress; we are late with dinner."

Sarah, always glad to play the lady's maid, followed me up the stairs. "Make me look my prettiest tonight, Sarah," I said. "I haven't danced since I was ill last summer and I want my husband to think his wife the loveliest woman present."

Dancing is a great bore to Donald—only once in a while he consents to take me. "There," Sarah exclaimed, exultingly, standing back to admire me; "surely, Mr. Donald will be proud of you to-night!"

I tripped down stairs to where I knew Donald was waiting and stood before him with happy anticipation. He finally looked up from his reading,

but with unseeing eyes. "Are you ready, dear?" he asked. Not one word of praise—didn't even notice what I was wearing.

Just here, Aunt Margaret and Billy came breezily in. "My, but you're the beauty tonight, Katherine," said Billy's cheery voice, turning me about like a top. "And see how brave Margaret appears in her new gown," he took off her loose coat that I might look upon his lady love. Voice and action were pregnant with affection and pride. It was this expression of love to which I had been accustomed that I missed so sadly in my married life. Donald felt so sure of his affection for me that he thought it unnecessary to give expression to it, only on rare occasions. But I cannot take things for granted—I must have the spoken word to be happy. I turned aside to repress my tears. Donald was wholly unconscious of anything wrong; but Billy, ever alert to my slightest change of mood, flew to get my coat and wrapped it about me with all the old tenderness.

The Lathrop house was beautifully decorated with Christmas greens. The soft lights, the music, the beautiful gowns of the ladies against the somber dress of the men, made a brilliant picture and one that carried me out of myself, for color effects have a magical influence over me. I love dancing, and under such circumstances—the gay crowd, the admiring glances, the light repartee—I danced and danced on untiringly—

After a time I became conscious that Donald was not dancing and I thought, "how selfish of me to be so absorbed in that which means nothing to him." I announced my readiness to return home, which he received with alacrity. We found Billy and Margaret, who were dancing with the joy of youth, said our adieus and were soon spinning along homeward. The snow had ceased falling, the moon was touching everything with a fairy wand, gilding the roofs of the houses and touching the snow-covered branches of the trees with scintillating points, recalling the sparkling jewels on the soft white necks of the women, lately seen in the ballroom. As we left the city and swung into the country road, we caught long stretches of the river in which the moonbeams were seemingly imprisoned, making a silver trail of light — so tangible it seemed to the ever-fickle eye, that one felt that he might follow its bright leading into the world below, even to the haunts of Bulwer's "coming man." We left Margaret at the door of her cottage and took Billy home with us for the night.

The hour was late; we went at once to our rooms, but I felt that I could keep my secret from Donald no longer. Holding him by a button as he approached his dressing room, I bade him pause for a moment, knowing he was looking at me with the paternal look he so often assumed.

"What is it, Katheryne?" he asked, smiling. "Your secrets are always worthy of a listener."

"You remember what you said this evening," I asked, "that 'all we lacked to make a perfect Christmas picture was a group of merry children'? Well — put your ear down close to my lips — I must whisper this wonderful thing — there!" and I held his face between my hands and looked into his eyes.

He drew me into his arms, so tenderly, pressing my head against his breast. He was quiet so long that I looked up, to find his face moving with emotion. "Are you happy?" he asked, at last.

"I cannot tell you how happy, Donald," I replied; "but I feel the need of so much love and kindness. Be patient with me, dear, for I am trying so hard to please you, to make myself into an ideal wife."

"And you are succeeding, Katheryne, beyond my greatest hopes," he said.

"Do you mean it from your heart?" I asked, anxiously; "you are so chary of your words of praise that sometimes I fear you are disappointed with me."

"Why should I continually speak, sweetheart, of what you know my every breath expresses? My mind is so full of the troubles of others that it is such a comfort to just quietly contemplate my own happiness. Always there is that inspiring thought of you, dear, shining above everything; no subject is absorbing enough to shut you out. Man needs a cause for which to work and struggle, and then a loved one to wait and watch and rejoice with him when he has achieved success."

"I feel that I know this, Donald, and I do not

question your love; yet, somehow, woman's nature is such that she needs to be assured very often that she is pleasing to her husband. Her very mode of life exacts this spoken appreciation. She lives so largely in her emotions; she does not have the two lives, the tonic of the outside friction, and then the soothing calm of her home. Perhaps, her vision is not so clear from the restrictions of her narrower life, but of one thing she is always sure — she wants to be loved.

“Love is not made of words and kisses, Katheryne; they are love's language and sweet to the ear, I admit, but love shines resplendent only through deeds.”

CHAPTER XVII

DECEMBER.

CHIRSTMAS morning broke bright and clear and cold. We came down late to breakfast, where we found Sarah bubbling over with Christmas joy, her face beaming with happiness. I thought I caught glimpses of the Christ-child behind those kindly eyes — at least, the Christ spirit was there. The dear old soul had put into practice, if not words, the prayer, "Give unto me the holy joy of human sympathy. Save me from the death of selfishness."

We planned to provide dinners for all the needy within our knowledge and Sarah and Mike were delegated to prepare the food and fill the baskets. It was a labor of love to both; Sarah drew upon her poultry yard in a way she would not have found heart to do at any other season, and spent days baking toothsome dainties. "Not only 'sweets to the sweet' was Christ's way," she murmured as she worked, showing that she not only had a knowledge of Christ's teaching, but of Shakespeare as well.

Mike brought of his vegetables and fruits. "With these pertties and fragrant roots for a rale Irish stew," he said, "it's a bit of sunshine I'll be

putting in their hearts." All the day before Christmas, Pete had been kept busy delivering the baskets.

Our own Christmas giving was small, feeling that the joy of Christmas is in being remembered, rather than in the gift — precious only as it represents the loving thought of the giver, and today our hearts were centered about our dear friends who were to join hands and pass the afternoon of life together.

Billy walked to Margaret's cottage and brought her back in the same way. They seem to have dropped years from their calendar and to have renewed their youth. There were no guests, just we four, and the dear old sunny-faced minister who has officiated at all the important events of my life. A Christmas dinner with no wedding favors and no wedding journey, only a walk to their home near our own — the sweetest picture of "twain become as one" I have ever known. Matter-of-fact, easy, unconscious of any change, each so sure of the other! Each, in a way, had lived a life; the fires of youth had burned low; each was hungry for a real home, for mental companionship — and they had found all in each other.

CHAPTER XVIII

MAY.

WHAT is so rare, so joyous, so soul-inspiring as a day in spring — a perfect day in May! “The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of the birds is come.”

I took my sewing into the garden this golden afternoon; but, with the gentle, velvety breeze kissing my cheek and softly tossing my stray locks, the bees drowsily humming about me — surely, it was a cradle song they crooned — my tiny garments made little progress. Each tender green leaf and blade of grass swayed in rhythm to the wind’s soothing measure. The spring bulbs were at their best, making a gorgeous display in their bright gowns of white, yellow, rose and purple. The beautiful moths, clad in robes a mandarin might envy, flitted from flower to flower for the tiny bit of honey needed for their few hours of life.

I watched a pair of last year’s robins explore the thin, lank limbs of the clump of silver poplars planted in the old oak’s place. The trees are bravely pushing forward the new growth, but the robins, flaunting them as a substitute for the noble oak, in

which they had nested year after year, began a systematic search of the garden for a new home. They paused in the lilac bushes near by, chattering energetically; suddenly, Mr. Robin, his brilliant breast swelling, and as though overcome with the wonders of the spring, broke into song. But his more practical mate called him down, emphatically; and I could easily imagine her saying: "This is no time to be singing, with the spring passing so rapidly and no plans, as yet, for our young ones!" Soon there was a flutter of wings, and they flew straight to the little brown house perched on top of the rose arbor, the recognized property of the blue birds. A querulous chatter ensued for the moment, an instant's vicious pecking, then, the robins' sense of justice returning, they gave up all claim to the little house and flew to a large tree in the wood lot, just over the garden wall; and from the merry chatter and bursts of song, I knew they had at last found just the right conditions for their nest.

In yonder clump of tall, white oaks, I caught a flash of red, ever and anon, and I know my elusive scarlet tanagers are settled for the summer, the self-appointed guardians of the oaks feeding constantly on the destructive insects that infest these trees. With his power of ventriloquism, he constantly sends his sweet, plaintive melody to the other side of the garden; now here, now there, now far, now near his song rings out, while the listener cranes his neck in vain, in search of the musician. No bird so annoys

Topsy as this gifted warbler. This is a hard season for her; she is nervous and ill at ease, knowing she dare not pursue them. As summer advances, she becomes accustomed to the tempting dainties and learns to sleep amid their incessant chatter.

The modest little wrens are building their nest in a far corner of the arbor, singing as they work and flying from place to place, in search of material for their home. The thrushes, blackbirds, Kentucky cardinals, all are here — a little settlement of birds, working in harmony, each finding his own place. As I listened, each sang his own particular song — then a silence, a twittering, a solo — then a whole chorus of voices! — but with never a discordant note! A world of song and action and reproduction — the air laden with the joy of anticipation!

With a thrill of happiness, I felt that I, too, was a creator! The glory of approaching motherhood makes me a part of the fruitful spring! I am filled with wonder at the mysteries of life! Just such songs of sweetness and hope are in my heart and on my lips as these feathered blessings are giving to enrich the world!

Since the first realization of a human being developing within my own life, existence has been one sweet song. I have seemed to have the strength of ten; nothing is impossible of accomplishment. I soar on the wings of hope, a builder, a creator of an immortal soul! Donald has been so dear to me, giving me just the tenderness I crave; he has seemed

to realize, almost with a woman's fineness of thought, the holiness of the pre-natal period,— a time when woman longs for love and care, yet lives largely within herself, engrossed with dreams of the future and of the life entrusted to her. No jarring element has entered into this Eden of thought. Donald has protected me, even from himself, and my heart is filled with love and gratitude to the father of my child.

Presently, Dear Special Friend comes lightly down the garden path; she is never long away from me these days. She comes with the glow of health and happiness beaming from her eyes; I greet her as the personification of youth, she is so rosy and beautiful today.

“ Youth is not a question of years, dear, but of spirit,” she replied. “ Youth is immortal, if we but shape our thoughts into freshness and fairness, rather than into age and decay. Life should grow richer and fuller with the passing years. If the inward life is sweet and true and beautiful, it most surely stamps the exterior of the form in which it dwells. We are all artists, Katheryne, and the form we call ‘man’ will carry the stamp of our model, whether it be beautiful or revolting.”

“ Margaret, there is something about you,” I said, as I held her hands in mine, “ that makes me long to soar into unknown regions, to peer into hidden recesses of thought. You seem to hold the key to all the good things of life.”

"God is the key, dear child," she replied, gently and lovingly. "He makes me a channel for the real things of life only as I rid myself of erroneous thought. Hear your feathered chorus singing their paens of praise to Him! See your tulips and crocuses, how gloriously they answer to His call to reach out toward the light! Only man hesitates, hangs back, is reluctant to acknowledge all the gifts God's love has provided for him. He has given man dominion over all evil, but man is slow to acknowledge his need of God, to reach upward toward the light, and, until he does, he cannot know freedom. We make our own bondage, forge our own chains."

"I wish I might see life as you do, Margaret. It is beautiful as you understand it and live it, but to me it seems impossible—and there are times of late when a new condition seems to be arising, making life more complex than ever. I can feel a shadow of it on my own life at times, even through the anticipation of the great joy coming to me—something I cannot define—something I have observed in the relation of men and women. Enmity seems too harsh a word to use, yet it is something bordering close to that."

"I know what you mean, Katheryne," Margaret replied, a shadow crossing her face. "It is not a new condition; it is what the public is beginning to recognize as sex antagonism. I do not like the term; it gives the impression of a new development,

of an evil that has developed with woman's assertion of self, which is error. It is as old as time: it began in the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve refused to stand shoulder to shoulder, facing truth, admitting mutual error and their willingness to expiate their wrongs together. For centuries, woman has held the position she acquiesced to at that time — bearing blame — the weaker of the two — the one who took the initiative in wrong doing. Had Adam and Eve been working in unison and for the advancement of coming peoples, Adam would not have said that the woman was to blame, and Eve would not have humbly submitted to the charge."

"These are such difficult questions to discuss intelligently, Margaret; it is so hard to look beyond existing conditions, or to find the cause of a condition. To me, it is only justice to give woman the ballot, if she desires it; yet, I have wondered if it is not the cause of a new outburst of strife."

"On the surface it may be," Margaret answered; "but it is not the real cause, the demand for so-called rights — the ballot, is the natural outcome of woman's intellectual development. The mist arose, you know, dear, seeming to shut out the true creation, the truth of being — leaving only the material, the mortal man, visible; only then, when by the first surgical operation on record, woman was created, does she become subservient to man, and the ballot seems to her the only tangible horn of the dilemma — the only way to return to her God-given place —

and she grasps it blindly, seeing in it the only hope of asserting her right of equality, losing sight, oftentimes, I admit, of the essential things in which she must develop before true freedom comes. In all things between man and woman there should be equality. Their duties differ, but in the eyes of the law, custom and society, their status should be the same. We will never attain best results in government until men and women work on this basis, and in unison."

"Woman is slow to use the prerogatives she already possesses, Margaret, or so it seems to me; she has not yet awakened to her duties, her responsibilities. It is her privilege, her right, to purify the earth, to make the moral atmosphere of the community what she will, to instruct her sons and daughters in right living — yet, as a class, she does not do it. The temperance question, the white slave problem, could be met in one generation, if woman would refuse to so much as touch with the tips of her dainty fingers, the man who tippling, or has unclean habits. Man desires the interest and sympathy of good women, and will have it at any cost, even the sacrifice of his sins."

"The best things in life," Margaret said gently, a faraway look in her thoughtful eyes, "do not come to us through strife, but from real worth. The men of our broad land are just as eager for the real companionship and help of women as we are for so-called equal rights. But the question arises, are we

ready to be helpers and co-workers in the political field? As you say, Katheryne, there are so many lines along which we may work for the betterment of humanity, and as a class, we do not. However, it is well that this awakening has come to woman; it is not a new desire — it has been coming through all the ages, the desire to be a force for good in the higher, broader, more interesting things a woman can be to man. The chains that have manacled woman's faculties are being loosened, she is coming into her own and can only be the power for good God intended her to be by remaining a woman in the highest sense, by giving all her grace, her lowness, her feminine dignity into the work. Our most thoughtful, conservative men see their own regeneration in the freedom of woman, but she must prove her right to freedom by her conduct. Years of repression and limitation have bound upon her habits of dependence and slothfulness in thought that will have to be torn away before she finds her true worth and power."

JACK, ever on the alert for his master, as evening approaches, here announced his coming with many a wag and smile, and as we stood in the doorway of the arbor watching *our men* come down the garden path, I could but reflect —my mind still in the channels of thought made by our late conversation, on the aloofness with which man meets woman on the mental plane; unconsciously, they consider her an

intruder, not worthy to enter the inner circles of constructive thinking — he always shifts into lighter vein at her approach. It is woman's privilege, if she so desires, to prove her value, to express herself in the world's work by developing her latent abilities.

CHAPTER XIX

AUGUST.

I AM sitting on my vine-covered veranda this hot afternoon, writing in my little book for the first time in many weeks. This is the ending of a happy summer, but with little to relate. Each day has passed by the same as the one before. My birds have not varied in their habits from all other summers — they made their nests, laid their eggs, hatched their young, tended them carefully while helpless, then taught them all the knowledge their ancestors had known since the beginning of time, when Adam gave them names in the garden of Eden. When these feathered wizards have imparted all their knowledge to their young, "precept upon precept, line upon line," over and over again, then they no longer shelter and support them, but gently push them from the nest, to learn the lessons only experience and contact with the world can give.

The flowers have followed in their usual succession, one coming to fill the void made by another which has completed its work and vanished. The same stars twinkled above my garden that "God set in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth in the beginning of time.

Nature has repeated herself as in each of my remembered years, has followed an undeviating plan — only to me a change has come. All through the long summer days, I peopled my garden with dream children, but not the "children of an idle brain." Mine were coming to meet me with outstretched arms and soft, smiling eyes, and the time seemed long in coming. All the laws of health laid down for the expectant mother, I have carefully observed, that I might not hinder the perfect development of the brain and body entrusted to my care.

When I confided this tender secret to Margaret, she only smiled and said, in her winning way: "Your rules of diet and hygiene would count for little, child, unless backed by a healthy mind. You have had beauty and quietness of spirit, as well as surroundings; your mental food has more than equalled your physical; you have created a beautiful world of your own, Katheryne, in which you have lived with your child, yours as much in the embryonic state as when it rests in your arms. You have looked upon motherhood as a natural function, 'as a sweetest joy,' as the crowning glory of your womanhood, and the months of bright hopes, patience and love will bring a sweet reward, the greatest adornment a home can possess — a little child."

Her words were largely true — the months had been a time of incentive and inspiration. Beauties before unseen and wisdom unheard had unfolded

before me as a scroll. I was akin to nature, following one of her natural laws, and therefore entrusted with her secrets. And the reward — my perfect little daughter came to me a month ago. So short a time this new life has been ours, yet it seems a life time! I cannot contemplate the time when she was not here, so completely has she established herself as one of us, so absorbed have we become in her future. Truly, "a babe in the house is a well-spring of pleasure."

As I glanced through the open vista of doors and windows, flung wide today that we may catch any cooling zephyr that blows, I saw Sarah approaching me, baby in her arms. A maid has been provided for the heavy work and Sarah established as dictator of the nursery, and it is a constant wonder to me where that virgin heart garnered its store of maternal secrets.

She was followed by Mike, with a shame-faced, apologetic air, yet with a merry twinkle in his eye: "Oy jist called on Miss Gore for a minnit, Miss Katheryne," he said bashfully, twirling his hat.

My motherhood has placed me on a pedestal, even in the eyes of my old gardener, so that he hardly dare approach the child he has served so many years. As Sarah dropped the precious bundle in my waiting arms, Mike continued: "Shure, and it makes me think of ye'r sainted mother, to see that baby in ye'r arms. May the blessed saints keep the little gossoon!" His old hand rested tenderly on the

little head an instant, then he shambled down the steps and back to his loved garden, in whose service his shoulders had grown stooped — only a gardener, but with a heart full of sunshine, finding contentment in duty faithfully performed.

Sarah lingered near my chair as though loth to yield her charge to me, for even so short a time as she permitted me to keep her. It was plain she feared my ignorance of babies. The downy head resting in the hollow of my arm, the tiny tendrils of fingers, twined about my own, as though seeking a mooring in this strange, new country — the soft, dewy mouth against my breast, thrills me as no other love has done, and I know that for all time she will be the lode-star of my life; and I long for power to resist the witchery of maternal absorption, that I, like the birds, may give a wise love to this dear child.

As I sat thus, lost in love and contemplation of my baby girl, Donald's quick step sounded on the walk and he was up the steps and beside us almost as soon as I was aware of his coming; he stood leaning against a post near by, gazing down at us with love-filled, possessive eyes.

"How happy I am, Donald, that you came home before Baby went to bed — Sarah was just going to take her," I said, as he stooped to kiss me and to peer at the tiny, sleeping babe, held close against my breast. Her rose-bud mouth was still in motion, in

memory of her late repast, which Donald found very amusing. She was a constant revelation to him. He loosened the dainty, pink fingers clasped so tightly about my own, when they immediately clung to his big hand, as though asserting her ownership. He gave a pleased laugh, smoothed and kissed the clinging hand, then laid it gently on my breast.

"What shall we call her, Donald? She seems so unattached without a name. 'Baby' is so impersonal. Would you be content with Elizabeth?"

"It seems a big name for such a tiny mite, dear. I rather like it, though, with its Hebrew significance — consecrated to God — even though I am a sort of heathen. It's a name that lingers in the mind with a pleasing dignity; and best of all, it was your mother's name, as well as mine. As you know, I prefer Katheryne — but your word is law."

"Then Elizabeth it shall be; she will soon grow into it, and one Katheryne is quite enough in our small family. Sit down, Donald," I said, as he continued to stand by my chair, "and talk to me awhile. I feel so rusty and out of touch with everything."

"I can't tonight, dear. I must work. I came home early to do some special reading that I need."

"Work! This hot night," I exclaimed; "and after your long day at the office! You give yourself no time to rest."

"I can rest in twenty years from now, when this atom is a young lady and my reputation is estab-

lished beyond question. My work is especially pressing tonight, sweetheart."

He remained a moment longer, fondling my hair, gazing down upon us with that silent, contented contemplation, then passed into the house to his books, his papers, his own life into which I am never invited to enter. When greetings are over companionship ceases. How I did wish he would stay with me awhile and let me talk to him about the baby, how she is growing, her eyes, her hair, her mouth, her nose, her five pink fingers, her wee pink toes, and all the wonderful things about one's very own baby. That he would tell me something about the outside world of which he is such an active member — but he has neither time nor interest apart from business. We seem to have a dulling effect upon each other; our personalities strike no answering chord. As I thus pondered, Donald again stood beside my chair, holding in front of my eyes a large, beautifully finished photograph.

"Philip Wentworth, and his bride," he explained. "The only close friend I ever had. They are just leaving for Australia, and in the midst of his own happiness he takes time to send us this greeting. Here is his letter filled with glowing praise of Mrs. Wentworth."

The handsome, dark face of a man, illumined by merry, brown eyes smiled back at me, giving me a strange sense of comfort and sunshine. I did not heed the woman's face. Donald left the picture

with me and hurried back to his work. I laid the letter down unread, and after one more look into the fine face, reluctantly placed the picture beside it. My loneliness and discontent vanished. What more could I desire than this beautiful, perfect child in my arms.

INTERLUDE

“The music in my heart I bore
Long after it was heard no more.”



CHAPTER XX

SEPTEMBER.

WHEN I let my hands roam idly o'er the board, seeking a silent harmony—some lost chord—varied thoughts come close together—varied harmonies come at call, but always there is the lurking discord in the undertone. I hear a sweet, thrilling, evasive melody—in a minor key; its liquid, dulcet tones purling along like smooth, flowing water, swelling in perfect diapason. I listened, entranced. Surely, this is the chord I seek; 'tis almost played, with no dissonance to mar its growing volume of sweetness and beauty. But—hark! What is this? A cacophonous tone slips in, a wailing, tuneless note; the melody vanishes and seek as I will, I cannot find "my song beneath the keys."

THIS is my first wedding anniversary. Again, in fancy I hear the thrilling, compelling music from the "Rose Maiden":

" 'Tis thy wedding morning shining in the skies;
Bridal bells are ringing, bridal songs arise,
Opening the portals of thy Paradise.

'Tis the last fair morning for thy maiden eyes.
'Tis thy marriage morning; rise, sweet maid, arise."

Again, I stand at the head of the stairs leaning on Billy's arm, palpitating with conflicting emotions, waiting for the song to end. Then comes the inviting, soothing music from Lohengrin, pealing forth as a signal to descend to Donald, awaiting the coming of his bride.

More vivid still comes the picture of Donald and me standing in the dining room window, looking down into the garden; his arms are about me; I hear his glowing words of love—the readiness with which he accepts my challenge to be redeemed today. But the dream vanishes and I am standing alone in my window. Donald has not repeated the love words. He has forgotten and I cannot remind him. Love's language must come at will; it cannot be commanded. "It is the little rift within the lute that, by and by, will make the music mute, and ever widening, slowly silence all."

MISERERE

“ Call upon me in the day of trouble ; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”



CHAPTER XXI

JULY.

BEING restless and unable to sleep this morning, I arose early and sat at my east window, watching the approach of dawn. As the sun appeared above the horizon, such a picture met my eyes as was worthy a night's vigil; such a scene as no human hand could find the cunning to convey to canvas. A divine touch would be required to reproduce the vivid coloring. An assemblage of smoky clouds were all about the horizon, towering high, one above the other in pyramidal form, giving a lowering element to the sky; until, as the "God of Day" advanced into this dense mass, such a burst of flame lit up the eastern sky that it clutched one's breath with fear and awe, as though all the combustibles of the earth had been fired for this grand conflagration! It might have represented the burning of Rome, or the eruption of Vesuvius, so far-reaching were the flames! I sat spellbound with wonder, rejoicing that sleep had deserted me, that I might have this view of the sunrise of a lifetime.

FIVE YEARS have passed since that hot August afternoon when I sat on my rose-sheltered veranda,

dreaming over the future of my first-born. Elizabeth has more than fulfilled the promise of her infancy. "Little Sunbeam," Mike calls her. She is the joy of the household, the light of her father's life. What this merry-hearted, beautiful little daughter is to me, words cannot express. Oh, child! Thou dost not wait to knock, but with thy tiny hand, so lately withdrawn from nature's genial clasp, openest the mysterious gate into the hearts of all mankind!

ELIZABETH has two homes; we have cut a gate in the garden wall between Billy's home and ours, and seldom is it closed. Only Jack has never been so joyous since her arrival. Whether this is advancing age, the added responsibility of a little child—he follows in her footsteps through all her waking hours—or the common malady, jealousy, which drives all joy and lightness from the heart, I do not know. Seldom does he lie at my feet now, and he has ceased to expect my attention.

But a great sorrow has entered our lives, overshadowing the joy of the possession of this beautiful daughter. A second child, a little son, has come to Donald and me, but not to bless. A tiny weakling, six months old today, but with the growth and development of an infant of a month. Never is he absent from my thoughts, seldom beyond the reach of my hand—a whining, restless, almost unresponsive babe. The mother-heart is no less

tender for this ailing, imperfect child, than for the lovely, perfect Elizabeth; but while one is a great joy, the other is a source of heart-rending grief.

The physician tells us that with great care he may live, and, perhaps, in time, develop into normal childhood. This uncertainty is unbearable, is wearing me out; and when, but yesterday, I sought Margaret, with impatience for the doctor's lack of knowledge, she chided me: "Why should you expect him to know more, dear?" she said. "He is but mortal, like ourselves. He is no more a seer than you are; his limitations are the same; his work is largely chance. Do not censure him; he is trying to help humanity in the only way he knows; he is giving the public what it demands. If I could only lead you to the Great Physician, Katheryne, the One who 'healeth all diseases,' I know that little Allan would be well."

But I turned from her impatiently: "Don't, Margaret!" I cried; "don't talk to me of Bible promises! They are beautiful in theory and language, but I might as well read Sanskrit for comfort. They bring no surcease from sorrow; they only irritate me by their unsubstantiality; there's nothing in them — 'an ocean of dreams without a sound.'"

"That is because you will not attune your ear to God's voice, Katheryne. When one accepts the true view of health he is relieved from fear and uncer-

tainty about the future ; he has an abiding consciousness of unchanging good."

" But why should you know more of God and the realities of life than I do, or any other student of man and his problems ? " I asked petulantly. " If God is all powerful, as you think He is, and we are all His children, as you say, why does He permit suffering ? Why did He send a poor little weakling, like Allan, into the world ? "

" God does not send weakness into the world, dear ; it comes from some other source. It is useless for us to go over this subject again — we have worn it threadbare. It is for us to find the cause of the weakness. And as to my knowledge of God, it comes from a willingness to submit my will to the Divine will. Through this submission, I have come to know that the so-called miracles of Christ's time were simply the natural result of the law of good, which is as applicable today as it was two thousand years ago. Man had well nigh forgotten the great things possible to him who turns to God as an ever-present help ; a friend who instills wisdom in the heart, who gives courage and strength to do the right, until he comes to acknowledge the truth, that there is no power apart from God, good ; and through inspiration, self-denial and meekness this great gift has been returned to man."

" Words, words, words — they mean nothing else to me, Margaret ; and my heart is racked with pain to see my little son a seeming nothing. My suffer-

ing would count for little and I would not mind the constant care if I could only know that in time Allan would be a normal child."

"I know, dear heart, how heavy your burden is. I wish I could unclasp it and see it drop from you. You are sick with misery; fear is clutching your heart-strings, strangling all the joy out of your life; yet, with all my love for you, I cannot help you in the only way I know until you reach out for the good awaiting you. 'Patiently He stands at the door and knocks. Human sympathy but adds to our sorrows, while God's love is like a hot bath on a winter's morning. It brings a glow of comfort and warmth that permeates all one's being. It would soon destroy the misery and fear that are mastering you, dear child."

"Oh, Margaret, please say no more; my nerves are taut to the breaking point. I am so weary with loss of sleep and worry that I'm hardly responsible for my words or actions. Forgive me for anything unkind I may have said. You and Billy are my only comfort. But I cannot think as you do. I must see something tangible being done to save Allan."

Margaret soothed and comforted me, as always, by her silence, at last leaving me refreshed and rested, with relaxed mind and muscles. But life seemed a tragedy to me with this threatening phantom. Margaret said we must seek the cause. Could I be in any way to blame? I had observed the laws of health as carefully before Allan's birth as with

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Elizabeth; but what a contrast! Unbidden, words spoken by Dear Special Friend in that first happy summer came to mind: "Your laws of hygiene and diet would count for little unless backed by a healthy mind."

A shiver passed through me at the thought. In the months before Allan's birth, I had the feeling of being behind prison walls. Donald could not understand nor fathom the change that had transformed me—nor could I. One never-to-be-forgotten day, he stooped to kiss me, but I turned petulantly away. I felt that I could not endure the touch of his lips. An angry look came into his eyes. He pushed me aside, and with set lips strode from the room. He had never been harsh with me before. I could not explain my condition of mind to him, and I wondered if any man understood woman's needs sufficiently to be tender. I have never doubted Donald's love; I cannot; I did not question, even then. He has given me beautiful care and consideration, but never understanding. His work absorbs him; his worth is advancing him into an ever-widening field of service; he allows himself no relaxation. Ambition has come to rule his life. He is ascending the Mount of Vision, which means to scorn pleasures, to spend days and nights in labor, to sacrifice much that is considered valuable in life. We all desire love and admiration, but we cannot realize two such ideals simultaneously. In my few hours free from care since Allan's com-

ing, I have longed for his companionship, but I have ceased to ask for it. He has never yielded to my entreaties, if they interfered with his own plans. I have no mental stimulus for him; therefore, he can give me none of his precious time. He has no conception of my torture of mind; he does not know that quietness to the "quick bosom is a hell." He wants only part of me, the sweet, feminine part, that loves to be courted and conquered—not the real me that thinks and dreams. I am always thrown back upon myself. I have striven against this rebellion, but cannot cast it off. I see myself becoming a nonentity, swallowed up in a stronger, a dominating mind. He would crown me with the victories won from life, but they are not what I desire. I want his inner life; I want to feel myself a part of his victories. But it cannot be—the real man and the real woman are aliens. There is a lack, a great void, between us. And are these seething thoughts, this irritation, this discontent, as of "sweet bells, jangled out of tune," the cause of Allan's weakness?

CHAPTER XXII

JUNE.

AT last the sword has fallen — the slender hair has broken. Yesterday, I found Allan unconscious on the garden path, with his dog whimpering beside him, licking his face, using all his dog wisdom to revive his best-loved playmate, but of no avail. Almost fainting with the sick sensations surging through me, I carried his little limp form, that looked so like death, into the cool library and laid him on the couch, where the light fell full upon his face. So horrified was I, so numb with fear, that I made no effort to revive him. It did not occur to me to call for assistance; I only knelt beside him, gazing at him with mute anguish. It seemed the culmination of the terrible fear that had hung over me like a pall for the past five years. I had known no peace, no security since Allan's birth — only shriveling suspense and torment. He had grown to normal size and apparently normal mentality, but was still delicate, more often ill than well. For some time, he had had attacks of dizziness that for several moments would master him and then disappear, leaving him, seemingly, as well as

ever — a subtle something, that kept me in mortal terror — and, this is the end.

As my eyes were still riveted on his white, death-like features, his little form and face were convulsed and contorted out of human shape, as though demons had taken possession of him and were rending him limb from limb; and I knelt there, still motionless, held as by a serpent's charm, watching my little child, helpless in a monster's grip.

Kindly darkness came over me at last and I fell beside him. How long I lay there, I do not know. I wakened to find Allan sitting beside me, smoothing my hair, himself again, but looking so white and sick, and with a dazed, wandering look in his eyes. I gathered him close to me, fiercely — surely, mother love could protect him from all evil!

"Don't cry, muvver," he said, wiping the tears from my face with his little hand. "I'm all right. I don't know what came to me, but I'm well now, muvver, see!" and he stood weakly before me, bravely expanding his tiny shoulders to prove his words. I followed his courageous example and dried my tears, pushed my misery back into my heart and turned the key. We went in search of Elizabeth and found her curled up on my gray stone bench, with a book. The loved bench of my girlhood is seldom occupied by myself now, but has become Elizabeth's favorite haunt. She has grown into a tall, beautiful girl of ten, with her father's far-seeing gray eyes and keen mind. She ran to meet

us, and with a child's quick instinct, and tender love, detected the turbulence in my face which I could not wholly banish, but a slight shake of the head quieted the question on her lips. Allan begged for a story and we seated ourselves to listen, while Elizabeth read.

No word of that story which so filled my children with bubbling mirth reached my mind. I sat watching intently for Donald's appearance. He is so strong, so resourceful, I thought, surely he can suggest something to lighten the gloom. Even Elizabeth's beauty and promise brought no ray of sunshine into my heart — pain is too opaque for even joy to filter through. At last, I heard Donald's footsteps and leaving the children, I flew to meet him. My quick approach filled him with alarm. In hurried, breathless words, I told him all. A tense look came into his eyes; his teeth clenched; an ashy pallor overspread his face; he uttered no word; his breath came in hard, quick-drawn sighs, and his hands pressed upon my shoulders. I knew his fears were the same terrible ones grasping and absorbing my life.

Next day, we took Allan into the City to consult a physician. Our worst fears were confirmed. Our little son was an epileptic. The physician tried to be kind, but he gave us little hope. Quiet, outdoor life would retard the disease, he said; growth might overcome the evil; but, while his words contained a ray of hope, his eyes were compassionate.

Margaret is ever near to me in these days of intense mental suffering, ever ready to help in any way she may ; but long ago she ceased to urge God's love as a healing power. Too often had I pushed aside with impatience the proffered help ; — too often had I doubted its efficiency ; too often questioned even the existence of a God. So, we settled down into dull, feverish, resentful silence, to await the disappearance of the dreadful monster, hoping, with the futile buoyancy of the human mind, that it would slink away. But our hopes were vain ; it was not willing to relinquish its prey. It came and came again, until our dear child was worn with the struggle, and our hearts the throne of despair. This dull, dead eternity of waiting and uncertainty became a phantom, which pursued, waking or sleeping — my dreams repeating the terrible scenes of the day. Donald had grown taciturn and hard, unapproachable at any point. I knew the terrible grief that was pursuing him and pitied, rather than censured.

AT LAST, months after that woeful day, when I first found Allan unconscious on the garden path, and following an unusually strenuous period for the child, Donald announced suddenly at breakfast, one morning, that he was going to take Allan to New York to the great epileptic specialist. How I rejoiced at any change, any surcease from sorrow — a pin-hole of hope !

They were gone but five days, days in which I found my heart reviving with some of its old-time buoyancy, even heard myself humming an air from my seemingly long distant youth. Wonderful things had this great physician done; his fame was widespread. I had high hopes. But one look into Donald's face on their return sent me back into the dungeon. "No hope" was written there in great black letters — our only son a hopeless epileptic! Later, with an outward hardness, Donald told me the great man's verdict. Only two words, of all he said, left any impression upon me, however, and they were indelibly stamped upon the tablets of brain and heart: "Incurable! Congenital!" A terrible specter confronted me with those words, that would neither leave me nor be silenced. "Congenital!" How it hissed and whispered its ghastly menace! How vividly those feverish, restless, questioning, discontented days before Allan's birth came back to me! Did not his torture of body resemble my torture of mind? Oh, horrible thought! Were we to blame for this defective child? Was I to blame? Was I the ignorant cause of a marred life? And the specter grinned, showing its terrible fangs and flapped its arms exultingly. "The sins of the fathers visited upon the children!" it seemed to shout. Could this unbelievable thing be true? This was one of the edicts that had driven me from a belief in God — that the innocent should suffer for the guilty, was demoniacal.

In the light of this self-lashing, the days of my courtship came back to me, but brought no comfort. I knew then, as well as a girl can know, that I did not love Donald; that he did not "grapple me to him with hooks of steel." I had done as Billy warned, "given him half a woman." I had deluded myself into believing that he had sufficient love for both; that perfect physique could produce perfect offspring, without the great motive power of love. In my egoism and superiority, I had counted the great sin of marriage, infidelity; and here was I from my pedestal, I, Katheryne Forbes, to realize that I had committed a far greater sin. I had married against the keen instincts of my woman's nature, fearing to hurt the man who loved me so intensely — and for perfect children. And what is the result? — an epileptic son, and two lives wrecked.

For, in this awful self-revealing, I have come to acknowledge a thing that has followed me for weeks, but from which I have dodged and hidden. The truth comes now with accelerated force. Donald no longer loves me; I have driven him from me with coldness, forgetting that love must be cultivated to live. All our ideals are shattered. I could not bear more children, with possibilities of others like my precious Allan; and so, we have lived apart. The "dream room" has again become my own. Oh, the pity of it! A man and woman, perfect physically and mentally, pledging themselves to "love, honor and obey" through all the years that they may

live, when they can no more harmonize and mingle than oil and water ; as ignorant of each other's minds, aspirations and desires, as though each spoke a different language; with no understanding of each other's needs; reacting on each other like antagonistic chemicals ! We had fretted, irritated and misunderstood each other, because we had not the alchemy of love as a solvent ; an alchemy in which all misunderstandings would have vanished and we two have been merged into one. Ten years under one roof, with children to cement our union ; yet, are we strangers, each living in his own world of thought, which the other may not enter ! We have had our joys and happy times together ; all has not been sorrow — wrongs grow slowly, subtly ; and little jealousies I had felt and wondered at and resented, in the intense light of pain, became plain ; all the miserable past was illumined — I knew no jealousy, because I did not love, and because I knew I was loved. "Oh, Donald," I cried, in my mental anguish, "forgive the great wrong I have done to you and your child ! "

Looking through the vista of the past, I realize that this division began in that first beautiful month. We were apart, divided, even then, held only by physical charm ; and now, too late, "He prays, come over ; I may not follow. I say, return ; but he cannot come. We speak, we laugh, but with voices hollow. Our hands are hanging, our hearts are numb."

A chasm yawns between and no crossing, and I the guilty cause. "I sinned ignorantly," I cry in my despair at the menacing specter ever hovering over me. "Is ignorance an excuse for Allan's worn body and mind?" he asks, threatening, as though fearing my escape, and my lacerated heart answers, "No! No! No!"

CHAPTER XXIII

JUNE.

MY castles are all demolished ; my dreams vanished — all save one, Elizabeth — and she, so slender a mooring to the bright fancies of youth, that fear whispers : “ She, too, may be taken in retribution for your sins.” Again, as in that long ago June day, I wandered today in my garden for consolation ; now, as then, I sought for a peep into the future. From the plane of my sick, helpless thoughts, I could see the long, weary years drag slowly by ; our home become as a prison, the suffering of our child, a hell.

Donald had taken the children for a long drive ; I could not go — my gloomy foreboding would cast a blight over all their innocent pleasure.

As I sat, surrounded by my beautiful flowers and happy birds in the loved garden, that was so closely interwoven into my life — my joys, my sorrows, my problems, all had been brought to the same shrine to receive, at least, a softening touch — and now, with the harmony of nature about me, even through the mantle of black despair that enveloped me, a

certain calmness stole; and as I sat reflecting, life seemed to me an incomprehensible enigma — we were placed here and left entirely in ignorance as to the purpose of our existence. We seemed to be drifting aimlessly about, without any knowledge of the truth of being, or how to acquire it. It seemed that the guiding hand of the universe, Nature, had adjusted everything to its proper place, but man; he was cast adrift, floating hither and thither, without guidance or any assurance of finding a safe anchorage. Some, by chance it seemed, found havens of security, love and happiness; others were tossed upon the barren rocks to die of starvation; while still others, like myself, were ever in the seething, surging sea, with no land in sight,—with food and water exhausted. Surely, there had been a great mistake somewhere!

I had always possessed a keen desire to live right, yet, a backward glance showed a net work of blunders,—blind mistakes. With overwhelming force came the question: If I had gone so far wrong in things seen, might I not, also, be wrong in my thoughts of the unseen power of God? Was all my reasoning wrong? I had come to doubt my own capabilities and understanding. Could I only know the right?

While in this frame of mind, a strong sense of my helplessness, of the wreck I had made of life, came over me, and I was swept by a storm of sobs. I could feel a something breaking down within me,

a wall of pride and self-will and self-justification; and I inwardly appealed to the great unseen power to unlock the treasures of truth to my understanding; to reveal the path wherein I should go, promising with a contrite heart to follow wherever it might lead me.

While still shaken with sobs, and as though in answer to my appeal, Dear Special Friend stood beside me. "There, dear heart," she said compassionately, "lean on me; let me comfort you,"— and she gathered me to her.

"Oh, Margaret," I sobbed convulsively; "I am in despair; I am helpless. Teach me; help me; I will no longer refuse to listen; I will follow if you will only show me the way."

She held me close, while she repeated softly words I had often heard from her lips, but today they carried a strange new meaning. "He shall cover thee with His feathers and under His wings shalt thou trust; His truth shall be thy shield and buckler. There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. He will be with thee in trouble; He will deliver thee."

Never before had words so filled with promise been given me; they seemed to take possession of me; they gave me hope; they carried me back to the time when Margaret held my hand and would not let the black shadows close about me, and I was

able to subdue my sobs and gain a degree of quietness.

“But, Allan, Margaret,” I pleaded; “I can know no peace unless he is well. Are these promises for him? You say, ‘No plague shall come nigh, nor evil befall.’ This devil that pursues him — can God overcome anything so terrible?”

“Nothing is impossible to God, dear. Sickness does not come from God. God created only that which is good. Sickness is unreal — evil — therefore, it is to be overcome and destroyed.”

“But I have not told you all, Margaret — all the terrible truth. I could not speak the appalling word, even to your loving ears. The doctors say Allan’s trouble is congenital, that he was born with an incapacity that cannot be overcome; that he must always remain a victim to this appalling disease.” And the anguish of it broke over me again with its relentless lashing.

“Be quiet, Katheryne; listen to me, dear. Congenital! What of that? That is a human law, a cruel, unjust law. God knows nothing of it. Jesus healed all diseases without questioning, whether acute, chronic or congenital. This is the same devil that ‘cast into the fire,’ and Jesus destroyed it. More, He said. ‘The works that I do, ye shall do,’ and this promise was meant for all ages and all peoples, even to our time, and for Allan. Take hope, dear heart, Allan will yet be well and the fine, strong boy God intended him to be. Health is our

birthright ; and now that you have fled for refuge to God, lay aside every weight — fear and doubt and worry ; put on the whole armor of God, and be ready for battle."

"Battle!" I cried, wonder filling me, and strange new hope. Was there anything I could do? Anything but this dull, dead waiting! "I thought this was healing through peace and love, Margaret!"

"True, dear," she replied ; "but, sometimes, the sword is needed to bring peace, and this devil, Jesus said, 'goeth out only through prayer and fasting.' You have much to do, dear — Allan's healing will come largely through you. Your first battle will come with the command, 'Fear not; be glad and rejoice, for the Lord will do great things.' You must be patient and know God's power. It is such a splendid thing to hold on until every obstacle is overcome and we have become masters of self and the problem that may confront us."

"Oh, I see!" I exclaimed, light dawning upon me. "I begin to comprehend the meaning of the words I have so often heard you speak, 'work out your own salvation.' "

"Yes," she replied, earnestly ; "no words so fill me with courage as these ; and never forget the last half of that quotation, which begins with a command, but ends with a wonderful promise — 'for it is God who worketh with you.' You must first strive to rid your mind of this word 'congenital,' Katheryne, that hangs like a black pall about you."

"Do you think I ever can, Margaret?" I asked doubtfully. "It has become a part of me, whether asleep or awake; it has taken possession of me and held me in the depths of hell so long — can I, do you think, even with prayer and fasting, ever creep out?"

"With God's help, dear. God's power can recreate you, so that 'old things will pass away and all things be made new.' We come to feel that we can do all things that are good and true and beautiful, through God. He gives us a strength, and faith in our ability to perform that could come from no other source than a divine one. We come to think of ourselves as God's children, to expect good, — then fear can no longer hold us in bondage."

"I do not understand much of this, Margaret, only there is something about all you say that fills me with hope and throws a gleam of light along my path into the future, as though someone were lifting my burden, sharing it with me. But this avalanche of guilt that I have carried so long does not lighten — it crushes me. Even if God can bring health to Allan, I cannot conceive his forgiveness for my crime of crippling one of His children."

"Your crime, Katheryne; I do not understand."

"It is a truly awful confesson to make, Margaret, but I feel that Allan's condition is wholly due to my state of mind before his birth. My restlessness, my discontent, my suffering are all depicted in Allan's little struggling body. It is almost more than I can

bear to speak of, Margaret — to feel that I, to whom this little child was entrusted,— failed him.”

“ You are right, and wrong, my poor child. No wonder you have grown wan and thin with this load of misery. Here is where you must learn to separate the true from the false. You may have been the cause of the maimed human mind and body — the unreal — but the real man, the divine in your child, you cannot harm. And it is this divine child, made in the ‘image and likeness of God,’ that we must know henceforth, never allowing the sick, helpless child to be a reality — until God’s perfect child appears, strong in mind and body. And you must no longer lash yourself with remorse and weaken your powers for good; ‘Let the dead past bury its dead.’ We are told that ‘he who sins ignorantly, receives few stripes.’ You have had your punishment, uncovered your own error, which is half the battle. We are prone to hug our sins and strive only to overcome the discomfort which results from sin. Rejoice! that you have looked within with humbleness of heart, and desire to be led into all truth, even to the overcoming of the greatest enemy,— self. We will work together, with God, dear heart, for the release from bondage of this dear child.”

As SHE talked, the sun seemed to shine forth for the first time in many months and I caught a faint gleam of the truth of being. I realized that

throughout the years, I had been imbibing this beautiful view of life. Unnumbered proofs of its successful application to problems—before unacknowledged—came to mind; but only when I had humbled pride and self, when I stood in the revealing light of truth, could I know that “Whom the Lord loveth, He chasteneth”—instructeth—and could listen understandingly to Margaret’s softly spoken words, “Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”

SYMPHONY

“Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind.”

CHAPTER XXIV

SEPTEMBER.

SINCE that revealing day, when I went down into the "Valley of Decision," into the Valley of Self-surrender, life has been a steady uplift. The shadows are still lurking near, the phantom often at my side; — Allan is not well, but much improved. It is not easy to come from the sea of Error into the haven of Truth; like the child, I must learn the lesson over and over again. When the old monster returns and Allan cannot resist his clutch, I go into the depths of darkness, only to be lifted out and comforted by the tender, loving counsel of Margaret and Billy; — and thank God, he comes less and less often. Inspiring hope leads the way!

Donald has put all prejudice aside and has come to have faith in Margaret's philosophy. We have forgotten each other and our personal friction and are working in unison for the benefit of our child. Even Sarah, in her great human love for this "stricken lamb," as she calls him, has put aside her life-long, distant God, and is striving, gropingly, blindly, to know the strange God "who healeth all diseases." And Mike, child of nature that he is, after living a lifetime among the flowers, finds it

easy to think of God and Good as synonymous terms: "Shure, and Oy niver did consider it square to blame God with our sufferins; and it's the maneness in a man that makes the pains ivery toime—if not mane outside, shure it's inside."

Elizabeth did not question. Her far-seeing child mind and thoughtful eyes seemed to grasp all at once. Born with a happy, joyous spirit and kept in close touch with nature, good seemed more natural to her than evil;—God became a near and dear friend, ever ready to help. Our dear children are leading us into unexplored paths of beauty and light.

My 'phone rang this evening and Donald's voice, with some of its old-time joyousness, responded to my "hello;" "Such a happy surprise, Katheryne! You never could guess whom I am bringing home to-night!"

"Not Jim!" I exclaimed, delightedly.

"Better than that," he replied; "guess again."

"Your uncle from Brazil?" He had hoped for sometime this uncle would come north.

"Better still," he laughed; "but I see I will have to tell you. Philip Wentworth is here."

"Oh! Oh! Oh! I'm so glad, Donald!"

"We'll have dinner in town and be late getting home but wait up for us, if you're not too tired."

"My weariness has all vanished since I know that Allan will be well. I'm not at all tired," I replied. "This has been such a happy day. Allan has been

so merry all day long, romping with Mike and his new dog, who is proving himself a fine play-fellow. Isn't it too good to be true, Donald, that all the horrible fear has disappeared?"

I could hear his happy laugh as he replied: "God is, indeed, good to us, Katheryne. And now, goodbye; we'll be home as early as possible, and I want you to help me give Philip the best time of his life," and he rang off.

I FELT a thrill of excitement over Philip Wentworth's coming. I had never forgotten the glow of comfort that came to me, when I first looked upon his pictured face, and seemed to catch a message from his beaming eyes. He and Donald had kept up a desultory correspondence for some years; after he had gone to Australia, but of late, even that had been dropped and I could but wonder what had brought him to our part of the world so suddenly.

The children, as usual, retired early, and as I passed from room to room to see that all was in perfect order for Donald's friend, I could not resist, ever and anon, slipping into my own room just to peep at Allan's rosy cheeks. As I realized the great change that was being wrought by the power of God, I could scarce restrain myself from clasping him in my arms. I knelt beside him, gently caressing his golden curls with my finger-tips, and prayed God to make me deserving of the great blessing He had bestowed upon me, to keep me pure and

true, a worthy mother of this restored child, and my beautiful Elizabeth. And then—I prayed so earnestly and for the first time, that I might find a crossing over the chasm that divided Donald and me; that love might bridge the divide, and that we might be reunited by the healing of our child. Allan moved in his sleep, opened his eyes and raised his arms to my neck: “I love you, muvver,” he said, and smiled as I gathered him into my arms. I cuddled him close long after he had returned to sleep, until I heard footsteps below, when I carefully returned him to his little bed that I might not awaken him, and hurried down stairs to meet Donald.

“Here we are, dear!” Donald’s voice is exultingly happy tonight. “Katheryne, this is Philip. I know you will be the best of friends—I have long wanted you to meet.”

As our hands clasped, our eyes met and held for an instant. Surroundings vanished; we two seemed to be standing alone, apart from all the world. Surely, this is no stranger! I seemed to have known him always. As our hands lingeringly unclasped, I seemed to waken to find Donald’s eyes beaming upon us, filled with pleasure at our evident admiration of each other. The hour was late. After a few light words, Donald escorted Philip to his room. I stood, unconsciously looking after them, until, as they reached the landing, Philip turned and glanced back. Again, our eyes met; a

flush of warmth passed over me. I moved away, turned to the fireplace and stood leaning on the mantel, looking down into the fire, wondering what had come to me. "It is his close friendship with Donald;— the many times that Donald has described him that makes him seem so near to me, like an old friend," I thought.

Donald came whistling down the stairs—I had not seen him so happy since the first weeks of our marriage. Drawing chairs to the fire: "Sit down, Katheryne," he said. "I want to talk to you about Philip, even though it is late. He's in trouble, and it's a blamed shame. Philip is the finest fellow I ever ran across— never knew him to do a mean thing. But he married that brilliant little butterfly of a girl and she's wrecked his life—he wants me to get him a divorce. Damn divorce! I feel as though I had murdered something every time I assist a man and woman to regain their freedom. I am going to steer Phil away from it, if possible, and I want you to help me, Katheryne—we'll keep him here and educate him in right living. You will help me, won't you, dear? A woman is so much wiser than a man in these affairs."

"All that I possibly can, Donald," I replied; at the same time, thinking we were a strange couple to educate others in modes of life, but to-night, he seemed to have forgotten everything but Philip;—"Perhaps their trouble is beyond curing," I remarked casually.

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“Is this your new religion?” he asked earnestly. “I thought all things were possible to God — no evil so great but that good could overcome it.”

“Bless your dear heart!” I could not help exclaiming. “You are making better progress than I am. You are right. God’s law is always better than man’s law.”

“If we work together, Katheryne,” he said, smiling at me a little wistfully.

“I am sure we will succeed.” Involuntarily, my hands went out to him; he clasped them firmly a moment, then hastily dropped them, turned from me and abruptly left the room.

CHAPTER XXV

SEPTEMBER.

BRIGHT faces gathered about the breakfast table this morning. Philip is a well-poised adaptive man and fitted readily into our home life, having traveled extensively, he had many things of interest to relate. He not only talked freely, but had the happy faculty of drawing the best out of those about him. I had never seen Donald so animated; he revealed a side I had never drawn upon — a mirthfulness I had never discovered. The children were joyous, recognizing with the quick instinct of childhood, a sympathetic friend. Each was eager to tell of the most loved haunts and possessions. I was silent, reflecting the brightness of the others, watching Donald in wonder, and ever and again, meeting the sunny eyes of our guest.

Breakfast over, Donald consulted his watch and said he must hasten to catch his train. "I want you to take Philip for a gallop this morning, Katheryne. The horses have not been ridden for some time and will require careful handling; but unless you have forgotten many things, Phil, that you knew in your younger days, you can master my steed. And

Katheryne knows her horse too well for me to fear for her."

My eyes appealed to him, I scarcely knew why. "Don't go to the city today, Donald," I begged; "ride with us; we will all enjoy it more. Get Billy's horse."

"Impossible," he replied, almost impatiently; "I have an important appointment at ten which I must keep, and I must be off. Good-bye," and with a wave of the hand, he was away.

Philip went to the stables to become acquainted with the horses, and when they were brought to the door with their satin skins reflecting the sunshine, I was ready for the ride and filled with expectancy. Nothing I so enjoy as a quick gallop over our smooth roads — one of my few accomplishments I have not allowed to grow rusty. The horses we now have are colts of the old Diana — family pets, but full of mettle. They are Kentucky bred, from a good old saddle strain, with fine, slender necks, and a look in the eyes like that of an eagle — something wild and free — an intelligence I love to see in the tossing, high-bred heads.

Philip proved himself an expert horseman, keeping his mount under perfect control, yet with an easy hand, so that she enjoyed the gallop as much as ourselves. The horses were eager to go and we covered mile after mile at a quick gallop before they were ready to walk quietly, side by side through the soft, yellow light. 'Twas a perfect September morning,

carrying that peculiar mellowness of autumn that fills the heart with quietness, as that of work well done. For the time being, all the landscape was ours; our eyes embraced it and our imaginations created fancies about its hills and streams and woods, its purple distances and its nearby marshes, yellow with coreopsis.

Philip told me of that strange country, Australia, with shadows flitting over his face, but no mention of why he had sought Donald. We talked as strangers will, of everything but ourselves; of the books we had read; the music we had heard; the scenes through which we had traveled. But as time passed, all strangeness disappeared and we talked as friends. Philip drew me out; I was like a stringed instrument, responding to the lightest touch of a practical hand. So the beautiful morning went, our eyes ever meeting in mutual confidence and understanding; and our faces must have reflected the joy of the day when at last we drew rein at Margaret's gate, talking with the abandon of life-time friends. Margaret glanced questioningly from one to the other, as we laughed and chatted so unrestrainedly, recalling to me the fact that my companion was an acquaintance of a few hours. I glanced at him surreptitiously to make sure that his face was an unfamiliar one, so completely had I forgotten outward appearances in our comradery.

"Donald has issued an edict, Margaret, that all his household are to pay homage to Mr. Wentworth

— Damon and Pythias —” I laughed, “ and one rendering of this order is that you must take lunch with us. Donald will not be home, so Mr. Wentworth will be dependent upon you and me for entertainment, and we must give an account to Donald.”

“ I will try and make your task an easy one, Mrs. Saunders,” Philip said, with a cordial laugh, and gallantly doffing his hat to Margaret, continued, graciously, “ I never so appreciated the worth of Donald’s friendship as now, when I am made a part of his household.”

After lunch, Philip went into the city for the afternoon and the house and garden seemed lonely. A sense of disquiet took possession of me; my usual energy vanished and I wandered aimlessly about, doing nothing. Even the children found me unsocial and left me to follow their own fancies.

THE men came to dinner early, and an illumination seemed to transform the house with their coming. A storm was brewing; great banks of clouds looming up in the west, and a cold northwest wind blowing, making the library, with its close drawn shades and sparkling logs of pine, the light of which brought out the soft, warm tones of the room, a most inviting place to spend the evening. Donald read his evening paper, while Philip had a glorious romp with the children. They played “ bear ” with Philip on all fours — a big, black grizzly. Who cannot

recall the tense, screaming sensation which shook him when the bear, after struggling frantically behind his cage of chairs, finally escaped and pursued with such bear-like strides that when we were captured our breath came in gasps, half joy, half fright, and we were only conscious of an intense desire to be free again; when, springing into our refuge under the couch, we shouted, "tick-tock, double lock!" and we felt that we could breathe again and were safe, let the bear prowl and growl and sniff as much as he pleased. The hilarious game continued until Sarah came to carry Elizabeth and Allan off to bed. I, too, soon retired to my room, leaving Donald and his friend to their cigars and their man's talk. I knew Philip's gaze followed me up the stairs, and because I could not help it, I turned and looked back to meet his smiling eyes.

Again, I knelt at Allan's bed and asked God to destroy this nameless enmity that kept Donald and me apart.

CHAPTER XXVI

OCTOBER.

THE middle of October, and Philip is still our guest. The weeks have passed quickly by, the days gliding one into the other, with little to mark their going. But tomorrow, Philip leaves us. Beyond that time, life seems a blank—I cannot plan—I cannot think where life will lead. I only know that Philip Wentworth has become the sun of my existence. When this awakening came to me, my first thought was for Donald. “I know now the pain of the years by my side,” I said; “I know the suffering that has changed his very nature—to dwell with the loved object, yet to receive no love in return.” But even as the thought came, I knew it was wrong—my heart refuted the false conclusion—it could not be deluded. I knew, by a subtle something beyond the power of words, that as I loved, even so was I loved in return; and my heart sang exultingly—would not be denied its triumph—love had been so long in coming to me.

No sense of guilt came with this awakening, only joy. Love had come unsought, had searched me out in my own home. It came knocking at my heart when I was engaged in the performance of duty;

found me bound by every outward tie that one holds dear. Yet the iron bars of duty were no barrier against the golden arrow of love. I just as naturally loved Philip Wentworth as the flower loves sunshine — by the natural law — by the God-given instinct, which, if heeded, leads unerringly to that influence that completes us, and makes man and woman one. It came fluttering softly down as a dove might descend, with the first hand-clasp; a sense of peace, completeness, rest, came to me when Philip's eyes first sought mine. I now know, as I have always dreamed, that love is a baptism, opening up vistas of inspiration and certainty of accomplishment that I have always felt should cement the love of man and woman. Now when this great gift is mine, as in a vision it comes, I can understand that the serpent entered the heart of Eve, as that of all women, arousing in her the desire to dominate man's life, to feel herself a necessity to him. The dove of peace and love of home is also there, but unless this dove of human love is guided by divine love — listens for God's directing — the serpent, as of old, ever watchful to lead astray, is constantly charming the dove toward the forked tongue of evil — the serpent had overpowered the dove when I married Donald.

No word of love has passed between Philip and me — other than that of eye and hand and tacit understanding — and never will. Philip is Donald's friend, and I, Donald's wife. Tomorrow he will go

out of my life, with love unspoken, never to return.

Philip and I have never talked of the sordid cause that brought him to us. I have, rather, endeavored to keep my pact with Donald by avoiding discussions of the dark side of life, and emphasizing the brightness one might cultivate. He had seen too much of life through a glass, darkly, and I well know that human sympathy with our woes but magnifies them. He only is a friend who gives us courage to do the right and to overcome the wrong. I talked much of Allan's healing, trying to make clear to Philip the wonder of it, but he could not understand; he had not seen the seeming miracle — only heard. That an unseen power could supply our needs and remove our discords through right reasoning and living was something he could not grasp. Not yet was he willing to acknowledge himself dependent on God. Pride of self and unaided accomplishment still held his mind.

"Your own thoughts are so beautiful, Katheryne," he said to me one day when I had been unusually insistent, "that you see beauty and goodness in all things, even in this, to me, incomprehensible philosophy. But Donald — hard-headed materialist that he has always been — I cannot fathom his willingness to enter this mystic realm — your influence, perhaps," and he gave me a sunny smile.

It was hard to leave him unconvinced, when I knew so well the wonderful power of God, and his great need of that power; but I also knew that argu-

ment was useless; you cannot convince a man against his will. He would come only when his heart hungered for that which was beyond the power of man to give. I had blown to him the aroma of truth and was content to let it exert its own influence.

Donald had striven hard with Philip to convince him that the law of God would bring greater happiness than the law of man, but without avail; the most that he had done was to postpone the legal separation.

The autumn has been unusually beautiful and we have ridden daily. Occasionally, Donald has gone with us, but much more often Philip and I rode alone. For days I strove against this close companionship; I pleaded occupation, and many other reasons easy for a housewife and mother to find for remaining at home, but Donald had brushed them all aside; he would not listen to anything that threatened Philip's pleasure. He feared to have time hang heavily for him—he loved him and wanted to keep him with us; wanted to destroy his false views of existence; and at last, when I could refuse no longer without appearing rude, I yielded wholly to Donald's will and gave myself up to the charm of Philip's presence, realizing with a pang that Donald was not considering me, or my welfare. His thoughts were all for Philip's happiness. He was determined to make him forget. So in time, we came to ride side by side, silent, with the silence

of perfect understanding — the silence that proclaims friends, between whom no jarring element exists.

Of late, Billy has developed a sudden desire for daily riding and for the past week has accompanied us to whatever distance fancy led. Days that Philip did not go into the city, but remained with me at Rosedale, Margaret brought her work and remained with me until Donald and Billy came in the evening. They were acting as my guardian angels, shielding me from myself. I recognized their attitude and did not resent it. I had ceased trying to buffet the waves fast closing over me and was drifting with the tide far out to sea — only Donald was blind.

CHAPTER XXVII

OCTOBER.

PHILIP decided upon a night train, giving himself one last long day with us. Universal melancholy pervaded the house this morning. Philip has become one of us — he brought a joy into our home that it had never known before; he has endeared himself to each member of the family. The children feel that they are losing a playmate; no fairies are so wonderful; no goblins so awe-inspiring, as those that people his stories. His "cozy lion" with its efforts to overcome a desire for devouring "fat babies" has become daily diet. So insistent has Allan been on "Bear" that I advised knee protectors for the bears,—great and small. Both he and Elizabeth are in open rebellion at mention of Philip's going. Sarah has never harassed herself so diligently for variety of dishes to tempt the palate, so appreciative is Philip of all her inventions. The horses' coats have never been so extremely polished as under Philip's watchful eye. "Ye'r a rare horseman, Mr. Wentworth," Mike said one day, as he brought up the horses, beaming under Philip's words of approval, "and he knows

vegetables and plants as well as horses, Miss Kathrynne."

Philip, himself, seemed in a lethargic state of mind this morning; his appealing eyes followed me wherever I went. They were constantly seeking mine, but I dared not meet them, knowing the message they carried.

PLANS were made for a last ride in the afternoon, in which all but Elizabeth and Allan were to participate. We were to explore a cave some miles distant, a curious natural feature, to which we had not ridden since Philip came, having waited until Donald could accompany us. This was to be a real holiday, with dinner cooked in the cave; our only regret being that the children could not be a part of it; but Sarah had promised them an afternoon in the shops, which allayed their disappointment.

The day was like early September; the brilliant coloring of the leaves presenting to the eye a kaleidoscopic view, a magical effect, ever varying with the thinness or density of the atmosphere through which we looked. The birds with their plans for migrating filled the air with their uncertain movements, flying hither and thither, now high, now low, in squads and companies, then coming together in battalions to consult their leader, giving constant motion and sound to the beautiful landscape.

We rode through country roads and lanes, drinking in the beauty of the country-side. Nothing is

more alluring than these unfrequented by-ways. Who knows what surprise may await him at the next turn, or what beautiful picture may confront him from the top of yonder hill!

We passed through woodland paths, flecked with the shadows of the thinning leaves; we paused by the bank of the winding stream to admire its fringe of wide spreading elms. At a gallop, we rapidly covered the smooth stretches of roads, taking the hills at a more leisurely gait, bringing our horses to a walk and carefully picking our way as we passed, single file, through a rough, stony ravine, which invited us to climb its rugged sides to secure the glory of its bitter-sweet, and in the depths of which flowed a tiny, gurgling rivulet, sending up its laughing challenge of greatness, "For men may come and men may go, but I go on forever"—until, at last, we rode down a wind-swept hill, to find the carefully guarded entrance of the cave at its base. Shrubs woven together with wild clematis and poison ivy, completely screened the cave's mouth from all directions—this wall of nature's weaving, reaching to the river bank—and you feel a delicious thrill creep over you, as the location suggests a pirate's rendezvous.

After enjoying the beautiful view spread out before us, we dismounted and tethered our horses securely to the near-by trees, and with lighted torch began our tour of inspection. So wild and primitive are the surroundings here that I never enter this

cave without the sensation of being an explorer, so impressed am I with the awful gloom pervading it, trembling with wonder as to what I will find and filled with awe at nature's handiwork — yet, I have visited it since childhood.

Billy, acting as guide for our little party, directed us carefully over the fissures, from whose subterranean depths came the hollow gurgle of rushing waters, which made one gasp at the thought of what might be the result of a misstep ; on, into the temple, with its columned roof and stately altar, where one felt the sacred atmosphere of prayer breathing through its magnificent aisles and corridors — so realistic was nature's building — and I found myself breathing a little prayer for guidance. Then, into the Crystal Palace, where our insignificant torch set each tiny stalactite scintillating with light, giving us a vivid illustration of the meaning of reflection, I thought, as we stood watching the rays flash from stalactite to stalagmite, and away into the farthest corner of the cavern, from whence sparkles of light came back to us, like twinkling eyes responding to a spoken message ; and at last, as we ascended quite a rise, we came into what Billy called "Nature's Dining Hall." Here the sunlight, filtering through crevices from above, gave a soft, mellow light, most pleasant for feasting — and here, Margaret and I fried the bacon and boiled the coffee over the fagots we had carried in and lighted, and soon we were dining as primitive man.

Philip, during our brisk ride, had thrown off his apparent somnolence, and was now, as ever, the life of the party, each, in response to his magic touch, giving of his best. He had the rare gift of touching to harmony the strongest chord, of bringing to the surface the best within one. He seemed to set at liberty the thoughts of the reserved; to create bubbling enthusiasm in the gay, by the power of his sunny nature.

I am sure none of us will ever forget that beautiful afternoon and the meal we ate under the surface of the earth. When hunger was appeased, Billy led us still farther into the cave, showing us the many curious formations caused by the combination of water and sandstone. After a time, we came to a mass of débris as if part of the roof of the vault had fallen in. We clambered over this pile as best we could, and as the eye became accustomed to the darkness, in the dim light of our torch, we could see deep, clear water, reflecting the roof like a mirror. A tiny canoe was moored at the margin of the pool, in which Billy paddled us, one at a time, to the opposite shore, dimly discerned in the darkness. A dome-like roof was above us, from which hung innumerable white stalactites, and deep in the water, we could see stalagmites rising in pinnacles to meet us. With this little lake, we had reached the limit of the cave, so turned and retraced our steps; and when at last, we emerged from its depths, the sun was very near the horizon. The landscape was in

the clasp of that last mellow light that blends all, as a painter blends his colors. The chill of an autumn evening was in the air. Our horses were trembling with cold from their long standing, and whinnying from loneliness.

We were quickly mounted and headed homeward, but our steeds, eager for their warm stalls, were restive and hard to control. Flushed with the pleasure of the long, happy afternoon and the close proximity of Philip, striving to enjoy to the fullest extent the present moment, to close my mind to the dark days confronting me, I little dreamed that the crisis of my life was awaiting me, lurking in the path over which I had ridden so often. We never knew how it happened — one of those strange, unexpected developments, as though some evil genius forced a climax — these unlooked for occurrences — or have they a deeper meaning — the uncovering of error?

Philip and I, mutually enfolded in thought, and having the best mounts, had ridden far ahead of the others, leading the way through one of the narrow woodland paths. My horse, nervous from the time we entered the wood, crouching at the deepening shadows, shying and springing at the crackling twigs, suddenly, as a flock of blackbirds whirred over his head, bolted. I lost control of him and he was soon running at breakneck speed along the path, when, without warning, urged on by his mad fears, he ran into a tree, dragging me from the saddle and hurling me to the ground, unconscious. How long I lay in

this condition, I do not know. When I awoke, I was in Philip's arms, held close to him—he was calling to me in endearing terms. There are blessed moments, when time, place and conditions are forgotten; when eternity lifts the web of the years and we pass through into profound stillness; when, for the space of a breath, we live forever. I opened my eyes to look into Philip's, so near my own. Love held me in a mighty grip. My arm went about his neck—our lips met.

I was brought to myself—made to realize that life had not changed—by the arrival of my husband and two best friends. I withdrew myself from Philip's arms; he lifted me to my feet. I was silent, dazed, terrified at thought of the scene they had looked upon.

A look of horror crossed Philip's face. No word was spoken. We were as though turned to stone. I was conscious of the terrible, set look in Donald's face, of Billy's grieved eyes, but no one moved. I was not hurt, only stunned; and my horse, a pet, his fright over, came whinnying back to me, relieving for a moment the sickening situation. Billy hastened to assist me to mount, and our little cavalcade rode home in oppressive silence. No funeral procession ever carried a greater weight of woe.

Margaret and Billy left us without adieux as we neared their gate. Mike was waiting to take our horses as we rode up, and assisted me to dismount. Still, that dead silence! As we entered the house,

we were met with loud shouts of glee from the waiting children, their voices falling on my ears like blows. They rushed to meet us with outstretched arms and shining eyes, but they were brushed roughly aside and sharply dismissed by Donald. As they turned from us, with tears in their questioning eyes and began slowly climbing the stairs, I involuntarily followed the drooping little figures, but I was quickly recalled by Donald's voice, low, sharp, decisive:

"Wait, Katheryne, don't leave us!" he said.

No thought of disobeying the command came to my mind. Automatically, I removed my hat and stood, waiting, cowering, for the blow to fall — but in all that misery of soul, my blood was dancing — thrilling with love's first kiss.

Donald stood looking intently at me, with an expression so varied I could not understand it; despair and scorn, wonder and hatred were there, but no ray of kindness could I find. I dared not approach him. After long moments of this incomprehensible, intent probing of my face, he turned his back upon me and faced Philip:

"No one could mistake the pretty scene played this evening," he said, in a voice, tense with anger; "one can but regret that the audience was so small" — with biting sarcasm. "Faugh! it sickens me, the same common old story — the press is filled with them daily — an unsuspecting husband, a dissatisfied wife, the faithless friend!"

He turned from us with inexpressible scorn and walked to the fire, where he stood, nonchalantly, resting his elbow on the mantel, quietly contemplative, as though lost in dreams suggested by the blazing logs — oh the horror of those silent moments! Can I ever forget them? They seemed an eternity! He meant us to feel the scourge of his contempt!

At last, still easily resting his elbow upon the mantel, he raised his head to survey us, with a sardonic laugh. I was dumb with agony and fear. Philip stood, as though spell-bound by that terrible look of hate.

“Truly, this has been a comedy of errors,” Donald proceeded with his mirthless laugh, addressing Philip. “In my fool’s dream of confidence in my wife and faith in my friend, I asked her to assist me in making you forget your wrongs, in steering you into new channels of thought, away from the goal you sought. She has obeyed to the letter; she has most truly made you forget — but instead of saving one home, she has wrecked two. But the fool will no longer add zest to the play. This house is hers; I cross its threshold for the last time, to-night. I leave it, and her, to you, my valued friend.”

During this scathing denunciation, Donald had not glanced my way. Philip stood rigid, as though turned to stone. As Donald finished speaking he bowed mockingly to Philip and turned to leave the room, not looking at me. I reached my arms to

him despairingly — he would not see; I called to him, pleadingly: "Donald, do not leave me!" — but he heeded me no more than if the silence had not been broken.

"Stay, Donald!" Philip cried, brokenly, as though waking from a trance. "I am going." But Donald strode on, unheeding; it was like talking to a man with deaf ears.

"You must not go, Donald!" Philip exclaimed, passionately, striding forward and grasping him by the shoulders, as his hand turned the doorknob. "You misjudge Katheryne; you are bitterly cruel! I am wholly to blame; you —"

"Be silent, Philip!" Donald demanded, hoarsely, shaking Philip's hand from his shoulder, and for a dreadful moment, I feared he would strike; but his clenched hand fell heavily at his side. "Why talk?" he said hopelessly. "Words count for little in the face of deeds." And then, all the bitterness of the years swaying him, he hurled out the biting words:

"Katheryne has never been my wife in heart — I have always known it. I relinquish all right to her." Again that sardonic smile took possession of his face, too repellent to look upon — "Relinquish in favor of my most loved, most trusted friend. But pardon me, Phil, for presenting to you that which is so evidently already in your possession."

"You are mad, Donald; blind to everything but

your own conclusions! Have you no mercy?" But only the jarring echo of the slammed door replied—Donald was gone.

Slowly, silently, Philip crossed the room to where I stood, and paused, with bowed head, before me.

"Forgive me, Katheryne, the great calamity I have brought upon you. Denials are useless now. I meant to leave you with my love buried in my heart. I should have gone long ago, when I first felt your great attraction for me, which, to speak true, came with that first hand-clasp; but, like the helpless moth, held by the charm of something he does not understand, I staid on and on, bound, I said, by the sweetness of your home life, the children, friendship for Donald—blinding myself to the real reason. When honor rebelled and forced me into a corner, I put a quietus on it by saying: 'No one will suffer but myself. If I am willing to bear the burden alone, what matters a few more weeks of undreamed of happiness?' And now, can you ever forgive this thing I have brought into your life?" He paused, but I had no answer to make. "And, Katheryne," he continued, "while I plead for myself, I must also plead for Donald. You must not remember the harsh things he has said tonight; he was beside himself with pain and rage and disappointment. We have been thrown in the closest intimacy for weeks—how could he know that what he saw tonight was one of those moments

unaccounted for, when no one is in control? Forgive him. I would give all the rest of my life to undo what has been done tonight."

I clenched the back of the chair against which I leaned, to control the emotion rising within me. As he stood before me, forgetful of self, pleading so eloquently for the absent friend, my wronged husband, I longed to go to him, to comfort him, to take the pain out of his sunny eyes — but God helped me to remember the ties which bound me.

"Do not grieve so, Philip," I said, when I could control my voice. "I find it very easy to forgive both you and my husband, for neither of you are guilty. I, only, am to blame."

"No, no! Katheryne," he protested.

"There, Philip, let me speak on," I said, raising my hand against his protest. "It will ease my heart a little and make conditions clearer to you. Why should I hide behind my woman's pride, throwing the burden upon you and Donald? This is only one more punishment, resulting from youthful ignorance and egotism. You heard the terrible accusations Donald made tonight? They are all true. I never have been his wife, although the mother of his children — because, I never loved him. Donald's only wrong was in marrying me, knowing this. And now, for some time, before you came, I have known that Donald's love was gone. I have not wilfully failed him. I did not know what love was. It took ten years, Philip, of ignorant indifference to murder

my husband's love, for love will not thrive unless fed in kind."

"Why judge yourself so harshly, Katheryne? You are not the kind of woman that men forget," Philip said, compassionately.

"There is no mistake, it is gone, gone beyond recall. This has all come gradually, of course. There was a time, I believe, when Donald gave me a great love. How he felt in those first years, I cannot tell. He was always kind. I was so absorbed by the joys and cares of motherhood that I gave little thought as to whether our life together was as it should be. I would have times of vague unrest, of discontent, a turbulent undercurrent that I could not define. But I never knew, until Allan's dreadful illness — that awful day, when I found him in the garden path, apparently dead — and the heart-rending months that followed, revealed it all."

"Poor child, poor child!" Philip said, laying his hand gently on mine an instant. "You have everything deemed essential to happiness, financially, socially — and, I believed, in your home life — nothing seemed to be lacking."

"I have said little of my own life," Philip continued, musingly, and as though to draw my thoughts from myself. "There is so little to tell; it is like a barren island, with no land marks. I married a beautiful nothing — wholly animal attraction; we would have parted the first two weeks, if we could have escaped each other without publicity. The

thought of motherhood to my wife was abhorrent; her physician made it easy for her to avoid this dreaded ordeal. She cared only for beautiful clothes and amusement. In time, the sordidness of our life became unbearable — and we parted,— without a single pleasant memory to dwell upon, without a regret — nothing sacred, only barren, wasted years. My wife's friends were much the same as herself. When I came into your life, my faith in womankind was wholly destroyed. I believed all women were vain and soulless. You, with your children, your garden, your love of home and simple pleasures, were a revelation to me; and — dear — forgive the words I am going to speak, but I am only human, only a man, and I love you beyond reason — your story puts a great temptation before me. If you are an unloved wife, why not come where love is waiting?" And his love-lit eyes sought mine insistently.

"If you had only come, Philip, in my long ago youth!" I cried—"I waited so long for you."

"Youth, dear, you will always have youth. You have the charm of soul and growth, which holds age forever at bay — and love, dear, knows neither youth nor age; it shines resplendent through all time; it recognizes only the divine fact that it has found the object in which it can rest secure — found that which rounds out life. I could not come in the long ago, Katheryne, but I'm here now, dearest — I'm waiting for you. I can still feel your arms

about my neck, the touch of your lips! Oh, love, those moments of revelation take my breath with their poignant sweetness! Come, dear, come — rest in my arms once more!"

He stood leaning over me; his breath was on my neck; I could hear his heart-beats. Why hesitate! Who will care? Why not snatch from life that has treated me so shabbily this offered joy? — were the clamoring questions thrilling my heart and clutching my breath. Heaven seemed to be in those waiting arms. If they closed about me once again there would be no return. I would be Philip's for all time. I recalled Donald's scathing words. He left me to this great temptation, hurled it at me — why resist longer?

"Come, dear," the insistent voice repeated. His hands clasped mine; he was drawing me to him. To resist seemed impossible. I felt myself yielding. I wanted to yield.

"MOTH-ER!" Allan's sweet treble rang from the upper hall. Philip started back, aghast. I could breathe once more, I could think. We looked at each other with startled, accusing eyes — passion checked. "I had forgotten my children, Philip," I cried — "forgotten Allan!"

"Moth-er!" Again the voice called out. "You didn't kiss me good night. We didn't say good-bye to Uncle Philip — can't we come down?"

I was stricken dumb with remorse and horror.

Philip looked at me with compassionate eyes. "Let them come, Katheryne," he said, tenderly.

Two little white-clad figures were on the lower landing, waiting permission to descend. Philip extended his arms; there was a joyous shout and they came leaping down the stairs; at a bound, Allan was cuddled close against Philip's breast — Elizabeth clinging to his arm.

"Daddy was cross to us," Allan said, his lips quivering; the quick tears of childhood filling his eyes.

"There, little man," Philip soothed, "Daddy was troubled."

"I told Allan something was very wrong," Elizabeth said, always quick in defense of her father, whom she idolized; "Father never forgets us."

The silence that enveloped us was pregnant with woe. Elizabeth glanced from one to the other inquiringly, then came to sit on the arm of my chair, with her arm about my neck.

"What's the matter, Uncle Philip?" Allan plaintively asked, taking Philip's face between soft little hands, and looking at him with wide, wondering eyes. "The shine has all gone out of your eyes, and I think — yes, I'm sure, if you wasn't a big man — I'd think I saw tears in them."

"Oh, little bubbly," Philip replied, clasping the child closely to him, "it's very hard for Uncle Philip to leave you."

The child heart was filled with wonder at Philip's emotion. This was a new friend, very different

from the merry, resourceful playmate he loved so well. "And is this why Daddy went away? Was he sorry? I peeped over the banister and saw him and his face was all black and thundery."

"Oh, child!" Philip gasped.

"And, muvver," he continued, his curiosity rampant, his child mind eager to grasp a new experience, "her face looks just as it used to look when she found me lying on the ground. Does her heart hurt, too?"

Philip's face was an ashen hue—he could only bow his head.

"I'm sorry, too," Allan wailed, the soft arms going about Philip's neck, his little form shaken with sobs; the inquisition could be borne no longer.

"There, dear little son," loosening the arms clasped about his neck; "we won't cry any more—it isn't manly. Mother had a long ride today and is very tired. You must always take care of her. Go, now, and kiss her goodnight, then you must go straight to bed—Sarah won't give us any breakfast if we keep her up longer."

That seemed a great joke to Allan, that Sarah would fail him in anything, especially anything so important as breakfast. With the quick transition of childhood from sorrow to joy, he laughed with the tears still on his cheeks; then, with his face sobering, he once more took Philip's face between his hands:

"Do you know God yet, Uncle Philip?"

"Not very well, child, I fear," Philip answered softly.

"Muvver will tell you about Him. She says He is a better friend than even mothers or daddies; she says He's 'Father-Mother-God,' all in one— isn't that funny, Uncle Philip? Wouldn't you like to see Him. He made me well, you know—I just love Him, and Daddy loves Him, too, just 'cause He made me well. We didn't any of us used to know God, but He's the best friend we have now—Mother said so; if you're sorry, Uncle Philip, just tell God and He'll fix it. Good-bye, Uncle Philip!" And with another hug, he slipped to the floor, gave me a smothering embrace, and he and Elizabeth climbed the stairs, throwing kisses at every step, and begging Philip to come again soon.

Philip stood looking after the children until he heard their door close. "The end of Paradise," he murmured, coming to kneel beside my chair, resting his dark head against my arm.

"You are deciding against me, Katheryne, and I am so hungry for home; I want you, you with all your glorious womanhood; without you, only lonely, empty years confront me. Why should soul meet soul only to part again? The right of love supersedes all legal rights. Through all Eternity your heart will be mine; you may send me out of your life forever, but these moments are mine beyond recall."

"Yes, they are yours, Philip, but I must ever bear the bitter reproach that they are stolen from the father of my children, and only as our lives broaden in love and sympathy for the needs of others, can we know why this wonderful love has come to us only to be denied. Let us strive to rejoice that a little child has saved us from ourselves." His dear head pressed heavily against me, his hand clasped mine, a moment I allowed my lips to rest on his forehead, then pushed him from me, holding him at arm's length. "Go, now, Philip, go, while we are both strong."

He carried my hand to his lips, arose, and without a backward glance went out into the night.

As I sat gazing into the fire, lost in chaotic thought, my door once more opened and Billy entered—I hastened to meet him. It was such a comfort to lay my aching head on his breast and feel his kind arms about me; I felt so alone, so desolate. "Can you ever love me again?" I asked, through my sobs.

"As I never loved you before, my brave girl," he said. "You have passed through deep waters and overcome a great temptation."

"Do not praise me; you do not know how weak I am. Only God could save me from myself to-night; those blessed children came just when I had forgotten all the world but Philip—"

"God never fails us, dear heart; by the alchemy

of spirit, wrong desires are overcome and the beauty of right illumined. I never felt so proud of my girl as now. You have fought the hardest battle of life, tonight, dear."

"But the wrong desire is not overcome," I protested; "I cannot see even one step ahead; all is darkness and desolation. That I had the strength to send Philip away, means little. I have no sense of shame tonight, Billy, no desire to cover my heart; all my being calls for Philip. Love is a divine gift; I cannot relinquish it."

"Have you no thought for Donald, dear, your children's father?" he asked, tenderly, pressing my face close against his breast.

"None, reason has no place in my thoughts tonight; only my heart speaks and Donald has gone, gone forever; he will never forgive the wrong I have done him; he has never loved me, or he would not have abandoned me in my great need. I begged him to remain, but he would not stay."

"Be just, Katheryne! Put yourself in Donald's place. He is only a man, but one in a thousand. His return rests with you, and you alone."

"But, Billy!" I cried—

"Say no more," he interrupted. "You must rest; you are trembling with emotion. Shall I send Margaret to you?"

"No, I am best alone."

His hands rested on my shoulders a moment; his kind eyes searched my face sympathetically.

“ You have never failed me, Katheryne, when I expected you to do a big thing, and you won’t now.” A moment longer, his gaze lingered on my face, as if loth to leave me, then he turned silently away and left the room.

ARIA

**“Love’s a mighty lord. . . .
Thee will I love and with thee lead my life.”**



CHAPTER XXVIII

NOVEMBER.

HOW the days have passed since that night when all the joy and light of life seemed to vanish with the closing of my door, I hardly know. My outer life is unchanged. The routine of the household has moved smoothly along. I have performed my accustomed duties with unusual precision, as when one's all lies cold and silent in the house, awaiting burial. We walk about and talk and eat and sleep, the heart wrapped in grief, but the body moves on, satisfying its material needs as insistently as when the loved one's hand clasped our own. The very agitation that accompanies suffering produces an excitement that sustains — a transient strength.

There were times in these dead days when the children lured me from myself, with their overflowing life and youthful buoyancy; when we would take a trip into the city, or a walk to some favorite haunt in the country; when they talked eagerly of the things they knew I loved, seeking, with a child's keen intuition, to draw me from the lethargy they could not fathom.

And, again, there were times — when the evening shadows fell and we sat enveloped by the firelight —

when it seemed as though their innocent talk would madden me — the children's hour, when the mother stands revealed before her child. God pity her if she has aught to hide then! All the dear home ties grapple our hearts at this winsome hour, when the genial spirits of the hearth fire are hovering near, whispering of the joys of home.

At such times, Allan would draw his stool to my side and resting his small elbows on my knees and his head on his hands, gaze at me with his translucent eyes and bombard me with questions that wrung my heart: "Where's Daddy, Muvver? When will he come back? Why did he go? Why don't Uncle Philip live with us always?" — and the myriad queries that only a child can propound, until in desperation, I would gather him in my arms, switch on the lights and find a book to satisfy his insatiable mind and heart.

Elizabeth questions little, but her father's absence is a sore trial. She has been gradually slipping into the companionable corner of Donald's nature, an entrance to which I never found. Oftentimes, she will pause at her play and her thoughtful eyes take on a sad, wistful, faraway look — then I know her thoughts are with him, and I grovel in the dust of humility. But more often, there was neither inlet nor outlet to my heart, only dreariness and apathy. I wondered at my impervious armor, my stolidity. Would I ever again be a sentient being? Ever again feel the swelling, beating, pulsating tides of life flow-

ing through me? I longed for some new inward strife, something to make me feel, to suffer, even, that I might be stirred into life again.

Donald had disappeared as completely as though the earth had closed over him. Billy had taken charge of everything. His thoughtfulness had inserted a notice of Donald's absence, on unexpected business, for an indefinite length of time. He ever surrounded me with watchful care, guarding me from all outward unpleasantness.

But as time passed on, this fictitious strength failed me; the slow, changed life that follows a great sorrow, brought back all the poignant misery of my position. The dreary, dull days of unexpected sameness, the hunger of soul, the loneliness, all threatened to engulf me in despair. My mind was filled with haunted thoughts that banished rest; or if a moment's respite came and sleep closed my aching eyes, it all came back more vividly still in dreams — Donald's scathing words, Philip's pleading, caressing voice. My mind was constantly reverting to the years of discontent as Donald's wife, writhing under his severe judgment, which I well knew would be formed without imagination or sympathy, from the heights of absolute loyalty to duty, from which he could know no swerving. I felt myself flush with humiliation at this unsparing condemnation, yet rebelled at his lack of understanding, the hardness in him that would not recognize my unconscious reaching out for the love that would complete me.

He had clothed me in perfection and never sought the woman divested of beauty and of form. Blind love cheats itself, believing only that which it desires, waking to find the dream but pain.

My garden — all nature teaches forgetfulness. Allan's healing came through putting away discordant things of the past and believing only in the power of good. Growth is the progress of oblivion. I know this, and I have sought for it — but I can not forget; memory is constantly slipping back to the golden autumn days when I learned the beauty of life. Philip's personality is stamped upon everything about the house, as well as the minds of the occupants. I have striven desperately to follow Margaret's instructions to "bar the door to emotions that are antagonistic to my highest ideals;" it has been a continuous effort of will — but without avail. God seems to have left me again; I cannot feel His presence nor His love. I have failed utterly, miserably. Donald has gone out of my plans and my desires. Philip, only Philip, fills my mind and heart. I have come again to question the secrets of our existence, and to know that the woman without a history is the only happy woman.

All the bright plans that had been developing since Allan's healing vanished. I was wrapped about with thoughts of self, living in a dream world with Philip. I roamed about from room to room, unable to occupy myself with books, even. I avoided friends that my thought-world might not be invaded,

and at last, when these unrealized dreams could be borne no longer, I went to Billy with the question that reiterated itself in my mind, until all else was a blank.

“Donald’s return rests with me, you said. What if I do not wish to have him come back?” I asked.

“I am so glad, Katheryne,” he replied, “that you have come to me with this question. I believe I can help you. Our troubles diminish under discussion. I have seen your pain and longed for your confidence. A friend, you know, is one ‘who makes us do what we can,’— who wakens us from sleep, who scourges us, if necessary, on to nobility. The years have proven my friendship, Katheryne — you do not doubt it?”

“No, Billy, never! But I am not the Katheryne you used to know. I have grown selfish, dumb to every voice that speaks of sacrifice. I am a woman, pleading for her rights.”

“Only to sense are you changed, dear. Character cannot grow in a night, neither can it vanish,” he said, tenderly, looking at me with eyes overflowing with kindness and compassion. “You speak of rights, dear. Forgive me, Katheryne, for going into the past. The thing that has happened to you is what I feared in the long ago, and what I tried to tell you that day in the arbor, when I made you so angry and you would not listen, for I knew you better than you knew yourself — and I will hurt you again, I fear. The old ties, the duties you willingly

assumed, have grown irksome to you; your heart rebels, and some way, somehow, your mortal mind would find release — you would break the chain forged by your own hand — that you may be free to follow the leadings of your heart. But this is not the real *you*, the noble, brave Katheryne, that rose above temptation for the sake of husband and children, for the sake of right; and even now, it is the divine struggling with the human that is making of you a battleground. The *real* you recognizes, even under the terrible stress of heart-hunger, that the ties of life lie not so much in our own desires as in the expectations we have aroused in others. If you are true to your womanhood, Katheryne, true to God, you must desire Donald's return — you must win him back."

"How can I win him back?" I expostulated, "when I have no love to give him? Love is natural, it cannot be forced — and, oh, Billy! Life is so difficult! The mortal part of me is stronger than the divine! I cannot resist the thought that has come to me of late — it comes and comes again with redoubled force — that it is right, sometimes, that we should follow our strongest desires, even if to the world it appears wrong."

"Yes, dear, this thought comes with redoubled force, just as all evil thoughts, once allowed to enter our minds, become more and more insistent as we listen to them. This thought, realized, would cut asunder all the ties your former life has made for

you, cast adrift those dependent upon you, throw a shadow over your children's lives that would never lift. If life were quite easy and simple, as it might have been if the serpent had not entered the Garden of Eden; if life had not made duties for you before love came, then this love that has seemingly absorbed you, would mean that you and Philip ought to belong to each other. But it is not so now; your ties are formed beyond recall. For the sake of right, we must renounce many things in life, Katheryne. Some of us must resign love. Yes, life is difficult, dear, but with God's help, duty becomes pleasure. And one thing must be clear to you, that while mortal mind tells you that you cannot sacrifice your love, the divine in you imparts the wisdom that you cannot gain happiness by sacrificing others."

"I cannot see now, Billy," I said, penitently—"I cannot see anything but the desires of my own heart, but I will try once more, with God's help, to be what you wish me to be. It will take time—it seems, forever. You will have to be patient, dear friend. I awoke this morning so desolate, filled with rebellion; and, I fear, ingratitude; when all at once, such a sense of thanksgiving came over me, for you and Margaret, that I bowed my head in sorrow for my wilfullness. Where would I be but for your tender care! But, it does seem uphill work for an unloved wife to hope to win back a husband whom she has never loved."

"An unloved wife!" he cried vehemently. "You

little know the man you married, Katheryne. Donald gave you all. He never can withdraw his love. If he does not return to you he will become a wanderer, without home or love, all his plans for life ruined. It was only when his famished soul cried out for something more than you could give that he withdrew into himself — his love has never changed."

"Oh, God!" I moaned, remorse beating on me relentlessly. "If you are right, Billy — if this is true, what might I not have made of life had I but loved the same!"

CHAPTER XXIX

FOR more than a year, I have been struggling up the steep ascent of the Mount of Vision, as Billy presented it to me. My progress has been slow. Many times I have taken but one step forward, and slipped back two. Oftentimes, Nature, God's handiwork, has portrayed truth to my discouraged heart, when no other voice could reach me. Thus, as I groped along a rocky barrier, seeking to find a path over which I could climb, Mike's battle with dandelions a few springs back flashed into memory. Our beautiful, velvety lawn, his pride, was threatened with destruction from this persistent weed. Each day he uprooted all the plants in sight, but next morning when I looked from my window, seemingly, as thick as ever, the saucy dandelions reared their heads. Each tiny rootlet and deep planted seed had produced new growth. So all summer long, Mike patiently worked a part of each day, Sundays not excepted, rising an hour earlier that the church bells would not find him laboring, and that no single flower should have a day's growth. And as he destroyed, he also builded, dropping a few seeds of blue-grass into the opening made by the

uprooted weed. Results were not fully realized until the following spring, when the lawn had never been so luxuriant, as with its added growth of good seeds sown and freedom from obnoxious weeds.

So, each seed of error sown must be patiently uprooted — came the thought; the wrong desire must give place to the right thought before the heights are reached.

And again, when hours of rebellion and darkness came to me, and the loneliness seemed more than I could bear; when the mists enveloped me, obscuring both the ascent I had made and the goal to which I aspired, softly fluttering before my mind's eye, as though a friendly hand reached out from the darkness, came the memory of my first experience with potted tulips which, after remaining six weeks in darkness, still gave me no sign of life. And as I surveyed the blank pots, my vision of a flower-filled window vanished; I was sure my bulbs had decayed, when, as though in proof of man's erring judgment, I accidentally overturned one of the pots. Amazement and joy took possession of me at the revelation! The overturned earth was white with pushing, vigorous roots, and on examination, I found a sturdy green sprout just ready to push through the surface. The bulbs were carried to a sunny window, where they were soon a stately array of beauty, a joy to the beholder.

So, the still small voice whispered, do we reach the heights of vision slowly, step by step; growth

made in silence and seclusion, away from the glare and roar of public praise or blame, lays a foundation that will produce a rich fruitage. Thus the mists cleared, giving me a glimpse of God and His mysterious ways of teaching truth.

"Flower of the crannied wall, I pluck you out of the crannies, hold you here, root and all, in my hand, little flower — but if I could understand what you are, root and all, and all in all, I should know what God and man is." — I looked back, and, behold! I had accomplished half the ascent.

I HAVE lived an inner life rather than an outward one. I have striven daily to rid my mentality of erroneous thought, to make each day one of mental advancement. I have made my own, one of the great truths of life — that we determine our own fate by the thoughts and emotions we entertain. And so, in time, my efforts were rewarded, as faithful effort will ever be. I reached the summit of resignation, from whence I could look back over the rugged steeps I had climbed and view the wonderful vision before my awakened eyes.

SWEET PEACE has come to me at last, the peace that comes only through duty performed and love of God, good. I have not outlived my sorrow; it has not slipped from me as a temporary burden — neither has it left me the same. The fire of anguish and wrestling would be of small avail if we came

from it unchanged — if we were nothing but our old selves at the end of it, with the same loves, the same thoughts and confidence in self, with no better understanding of the great power that directs the universe.

Let us be grateful that God, in His wisdom, makes of our sorrows an indestructible force for good, giving us a greater sympathy, a better understanding of the needs of humanity.

I trust that my suffering may never be entirely forgotten, that it may ever be a reminder to me to strive to direct the lives of Elizabeth and my noble boy — now grown sturdy and strong — into channels of right thinking, and away from the rocks that so nearly wrecked the lives of their parents. May I have the wisdom to teach them that only as love is of "the brain, the mind, the soul, is the sequel pure."

My LOVE for Philip is with me still, and ever will be. Were it otherwise, it had been a base, ignoble thing. If I had yielded to this beautiful, terrible attraction; had I forgotten duty to husband and love for children — forgotten everything for self, then would I be guilty, indeed. But God, in his mercy, kept me true. Love came to me when only pain could follow its acceptance. It has left me a more lovable woman, of a larger charity, a broader mind. The fire has burned away the dross, leaving the gold purified and refined. I have not ceased

to love Philip, but I have learned to be happy without him. That which is so beautiful and attractive between man and woman, I have learned, may be succeeded by that which is more beautiful still—that it is but the shadow of the great love God gives to man, and I am happy in the knowledge that God, in His great crucible of compassionate love for His erring children, makes of duty a divine healer.

I have come to desire Donald's return above everything else. I no longer question my ability to bring him happiness, if, as Billy said, he still loves me—but the "if" looms large and threatening. I have no conception of his location; have received no word from him. There are times when I feel that Billy is in communication with him, but if so, I am kept in ignorance of it.

WE HAVE been wandering about from place to place for more than a year, among strangers, where I could solve my problem without sympathy or criticism. When I drooped and could not be made to take an interest in anything, when gossip's tongue began to wag, Dear Special Friend suggested a winter in a warmer climate. I welcomed any change from my harrowing surroundings. Sarah and Mike were competent to take charge of home affairs, so our preparations were hastily made and we departed for Southern California, ostensibly—through Billy's forethought—to join Donald.

Spring found us unwilling to return north; the

dear old garden had no attraction — and here, we found all our home flowers in greater luxuriosness. If outward conditions could bring happiness, it would surely come in full measure to one watching the brown hills and valleys, watered by the spring rains, burst forth into verdure and bloom — a Renaissance of Nature.

During the heat of summer we traveled farther north, but winter found us once more at Santa Barbara. I had taken a pretty cottage for the season that we might live our own life; — and here it was that Donald came to me in the hush of twilight, as I sat alone one evening after putting the children to bed. Our meeting was one of those rare moments of implicit revelation, with which we are sometimes blessed. This was the compensation for our suffering. We were given transparent eyes, through which we could look into the heart at will. We had nothing to hide.

“ You have been long in coming, Donald,” I said, as we stood with clasped hands.

“ I could not come until you wished me, dear,” he answered softly; and then I knew that he had come at Billy’s bidding.

Longing to know the truth, to hear from his own lips how he had come back to me, I cast aside all fear, and asked pleadingly, “ You have forgotten all? You are willing to trust all? ”

“ Or I would not be here, Katheryne,” earnestly, looking into my eyes. “ Tell me nothing, dear, I

know all. We will forget the past and live only in the future."

"Do you mean this from your inner heart, Donald, that you will allow no shadows of the past to darken our lives? The human heart is so prone to hug its delusions, to brood in self-pity over the remembrance of former misery. There must be no hidden thought left to canker and drive contentment from the mind. Can you, Donald, can you really put all this away from you and be happy with me, as though it had never been?"

He gathered me in his arms in the old way, passionately, roughly tender, with a deep indrawn breath that told of weary battling with self. "That would be beyond human power, Katheryne, did you ever know a deep wound to heal without a scar? But the scar can be forgotten. We will begin all over, dear, and I am confident that we will be far happier than we have ever been before. I have learned through the same power that healed Allan, that if we would have the full joy of to-day, we must not darken it with the shadows of yesterday. I only know, dearest, as in the long ago, that I love only you; that life holds nothing for me without you."

"You love me the same, in the face of all the doubt and pain?" I asked wonderingly.

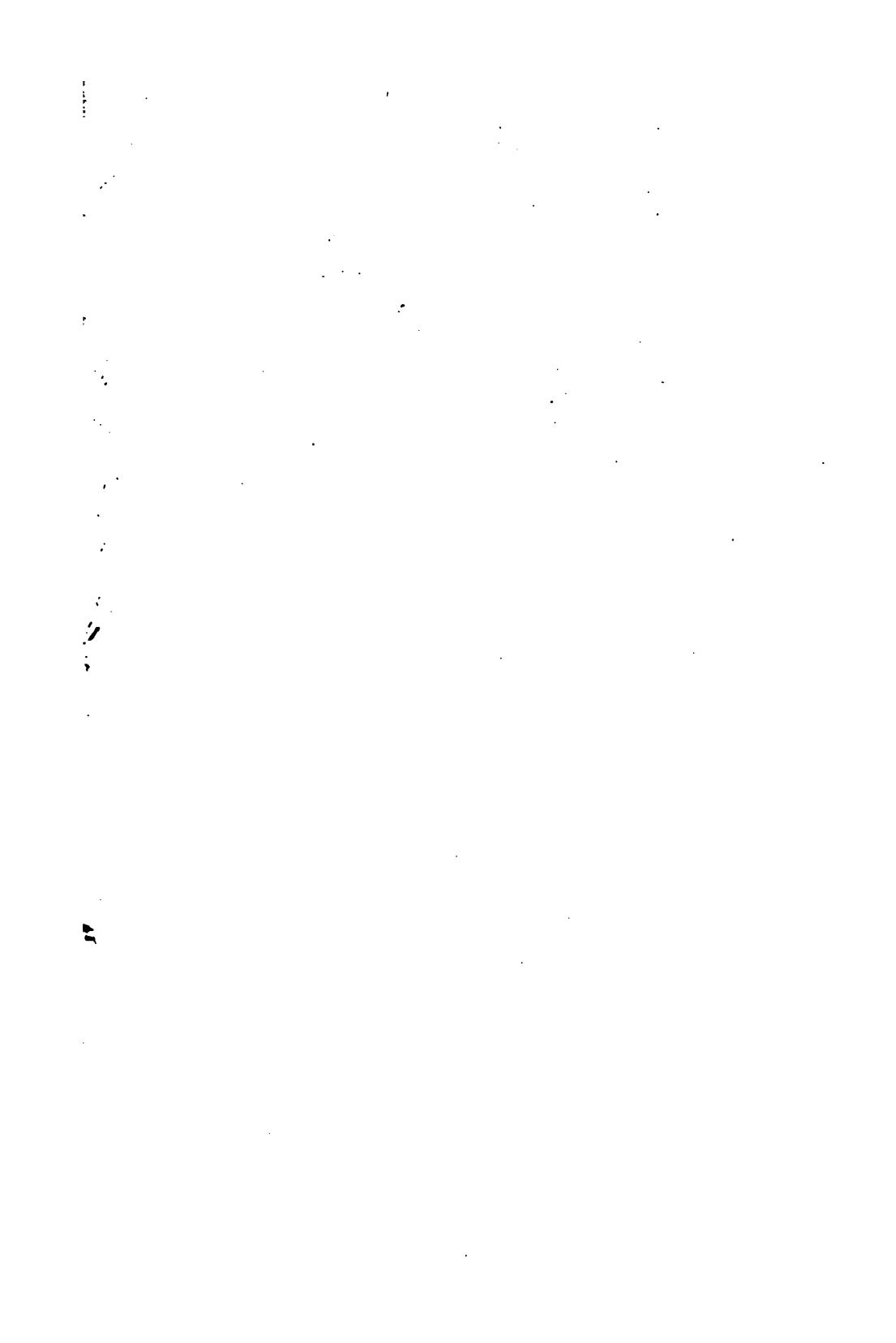
"Love is not a thing to be given and withdrawn at will; we do not know why we love; it is God's great gift to man, and will ever be shrouded in

mystery. We are attracted by beauty and accomplishments, but we love only her who completes us, who inspires us to toil, to struggle on even when hope is gone, who infuses strength into the soul, you are all this to me, and so I have come back because I could not stay away."

I slipped from his arms and knelt at his feet, bowing my head in humiliation, overcome with a sense of my own smallness and the glory of a heart great enough to contain a love that never tires.

"No, love, not at my feet, but at my side in gracious womanhood; and your philosophy shall guide us. I was so absorbed in outside things, in the past, that I forgot to be tender. I should have had more sympathy and interest in your work and plans; I should have made a greater effort to understand a woman's heart. I failed you in many ways, Katheryne, and have returned to make amends."

THE END



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